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"In a few moments I had handed him one of the dirty bits of Russian paper money." — See page 127.

THE AINSLEE STORIES.

BY

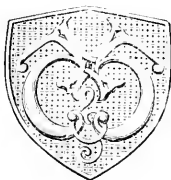
HELEN C. WEEKS.

AUTHOR OF "GRANDPA'S HOUSE."

With Eight Illustrations

BY

W. L. CHAMPNEY AND S. L. SMITH.



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I Dedicate

THIS, MY FIRST WORK FOR CHILDREN,

TO MY HUSBAND.

SRLF

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THE AINSLEE STORIES.

I.

AINSLEE.

Ainslee was in trouble. What it was Grandma Walton couldn't exactly tell, but he was walking very slowly up from the barn, Sinny following close behind, while something dangled from his hand.

"Land alive!" said grandma, "but that's one of old Speckle's chickens! What you been doing, Ainslee?"

"Playing with Speckle, grandma."

"What you done to the chicken?"

"Nothing, grandma; only hugged it 'cause I loved it, and then it stopped kicking, and I can't make it do it any more."

"I should think not," said grandma. "It's dead as a door-nail. You go up and tell your mother."

Ainslee tugged up the stairs; he was not quite five years old, and very fat indeed, so that

between crying and climbing, and the hot day, he was a very red-faced, forlorn little boy when he got to mother's room.

"I didn't go to do it, mamma; it did itself," he sobbed, when he had laid the little yellow puff-ball in his mother's lap. "Its eyes shined, and it was so soft I couldn't help squeezing it all up, an' then it didn't breathe."

"Poor little chickey!" said his mother. "Their little bodies are very soft and tender, and can't bear rough handling, and you'll know another time that you must be more gentle with them. Now dry your eyes, and your little hot face shall be washed in nice cool water, and then you will feel better."

"Mamma," said Ainslee, when quite himself again, "is Uncle Ainslee coming for sure to-day?"

"Yes, dear, and soon I shall want you to be dressed nicely, so that you will be ready to see him. Go play with Sinny now, and nurse shall call you when it is time to come in."

Ainslee trotted off, and from her window his mother saw him chasing down the garden-path after Sinny, whose little woolly head was bobbing up behind the asparagus-bed.

Ainslee had only been at Grandpa Walton's three days. The house was at some distance from

any village, and there were no neighbors near, except an old colored man, who owned a small farm, and whose daughter and little grandson lived with him. Simeon Smith, called Sinny for short, was a solemn little darky to look at, black as ink, with queer little braided tails all over his head, which was such an one for contriving mischief as one does not often see. Ainslee had become very intimate with him at once. His playmates, so far, had always been white children, and it seemed ever so much nicer to him now to race about with Sinny, than if he had been the best boy on the avenue at home.

Grandma shook her head a little, but mother and father both said it was all right so long as Sinny showed himself a good boy and did no naughty mischief, and so there was a fair prospect of their becoming fast friends before the summer ended.

"Well," said grandma, "Sinny's spry as a cricket, and if he don't run some of Ainslee's flesh off his bones, then I don't know."

"Was it dead?" asked Sinny.

"'Dead as a door-nail,' grandma said," answered Ainslee.

"Then let's bury it," said Sinny. "I'll get a nice chip for a coffin."

Ainslee ran to the house again for the chicken. Old Speckle clucked loudly when he passed the coop, as though she would ask what he had done with her youngest, and Ainslee felt sorry again, to think that it could never run about any more.

"It might a-growed into a big rooster, an' crowed loud every morning," said he.

"Then 'twould a-picked the other roosters' eyes out," said Sinny, "an' they'd all a-got lost cause they couldn't find their way; so it's good he got squeezed to death."

"So it is," said Ainslee. "I didn't think of that; but then I wouldn't want to squeeze another."

By this time Sinny had found a white chip in the wood-house, and he and Ainslee dug a hole under a hop-vine, into which they laid the little biddy, and then covered it up smoothly. Ainslee looked at his hands, quite plastered with dirt from the digging.

"Dirt don't show on your hands, — does it, Sinny?" he asked.

"No," said Sinny; "so I don't have to keep a-washin' 'em all the time."

"Did you ever have a bath, Sinny?" asked Ainslee.

"What's a bath?" asked Sinny.

"I mean, do you ever get put in a tub o' water, and be soaped all over?"

"No," said Sinny. "Mother washes me in a bowl, with a rag, mostly."

"Don't you believe some of the black would rub off if you was in a tub?" asked Ainslee.

"It might, maybe," said Sinny. "I'd like to get into one, any way."

Ainslee looked grave, as if he were studying out something.

"The water's all ready for me," said he, "and nurse is putting baby to sleep, so there'll be time enough to try it. You come right along, Sinny."

Sinny ran after, quite charmed with the thought of it, and the two boys went quickly up the back-stairs to the nursery.

The nice tin bathing-tub stood on a piece of oil-cloth near the wash-stand, and nurse had laid out towels and soap, and Ainslee's clean white suit all ready for him.

"Pull off your clothes quick, Sinny," said Ainslee. "It's nice you're barefoot. Now step in soft, so 't nurse won't hear, and I'll soap you good."

Sinny's little spider-like figure was quite lost in the big tub, and Ainslee found it necessary, if he would reach him easily, to get in himself. So he undressed as fast as possible for fear some one would come. One shoe-string, in a hard knot, would not be untied.

"I'll not mind one shoe," said he, "'cause I can take it off after I've done Sinny," and in he got.

"Stand up good now, Sinny," he said, and he lathered him from head to foot.

"You're white now in spots — ain't you?" said Ainslee, as he rubbed on the cake of soap.

"Oh-h-h!" howled Sinny. "There's soap in my eye! Ow! Yow!"

The nursery door opened, and mamma looked in. Ainslee, with his back toward her, did not see her, but he looked up as Sinny suddenly became silent.

"Why, what's the matter?" said he. "What made you stop hollerin'?"

"Yes, what is the matter?" said his mother's voice. "What are you doing now, Ainslee?"

Ainslee sat right down in the tub, he was so overcome, and Sinny began to cry again.

"I'm only trying to get Sinny white, mamma, an' I haven't but just begun."

"You've done quite enough for this time," said his mother, and then, to Ainslee's astonishment, she began and laughed and laughed.

Sinny, feeling a sense of injury, roared louder than before, and nurse appeared in the door-way with the wide-awake baby.

"Mercy on us!" said she, "but what's that in the tub?"

"Only one of Ainslee's experiments, nurse," answered his mother.

"Since you have begun the work, you may get out now and wipe Sinny dry, and then he can put on his clothes and go home for to-day."

Ainslee put out one fat leg.

"Save us!" cried the nurse; "but he's got his shoes on!"

"No I haven't," said Ainslee, glad to be quite settled on one point. "I've only got one on."

Sinny hurried into his jacket and trousers without waiting for much wiping, and scudded down the stairs.

"Now, Ainslee," said his mother, "what does this mean? Don't you see how much trouble you have made? Poor nurse must go and get clean water for you, and your shoe is soaked so that it will take it a long time to dry. What made you bring Sinny here to wash him?"

"'Cause I wanted to get him white, mamma. He's awful black, an' he was dirty besides."

"But Sinny has a mother who can wash him, Ainslee, and then God made him so black, and no one could rub him white."

"Couldn't they ever?" said Ainslee. "I don't believe his mother washes him good, 'cause he said he'd never had a bath, only been washed with a rag."

"He looks pretty clean and neat," said his mother; "if he had nobody to do anything for him, I should have been willing to have him washed here, but not by you, for you see you have made a good deal of trouble by it. You have splashed grandma's pretty carpet, and used up almost a whole cake of soap. It is not the kind of work little boys are to do, and the next time you want to do such things, come and ask mamma first whether it is best."

Ainslee promised, and in the mean time nurse brought fresh water, pulled off the soaked shoe, and put him again in his tub for a rinse.

"This is your only clean suit of white clothes," said his mother, as he ran into her room, "and as there will be a good many people here to dinner, I want you to keep it very nice and neat. Play in the house, and don't go out again."

"Can't I just run up to Sinny's?" said Ainslee.

"No, dear. Stay down-stairs with grandma. This evening before you go to bed, Uncle Ainslee will tell you a story, I think; so rest now, that you may keep awake then."

"Are they nice stories?" said Ainslee.

"Very," answered his mother. "When we were children together, he used to tell me splendid ones, and I don't believe he has forgotten how, if he is grown up."

By this time Ainslee was all dressed, looking very fresh and clean, and started down-stairs in high spirits. Grandpa had gone to the station, to bring back the visitors, and grandma sat all ready for them in her rocking-chair. Ainslee ran up, intending to ask for a story, but grandma's head lay against the back, and her handkerchief was thrown over her face.

"Oh dear, she's asleep!" said he, and then stood and watched the handkerchief moving lightly up and down as grandma breathed. A big fly was anxious to get under it, and he lit, first on one spot and then another; and then he drove off another fly that had lit on it, by walking right over him.

"What a fly!" said Ainslee. "I'm going to catch him."

This was easier said than done, but at last Ainslee penned him in a corner of the window, and put his fat hand over him. Then he walked softly to the hall-door to let him fly off in the open air. Up the road he saw Sinny holding a stick in his hand and very busy about something.

"Oh dear!" said Ainslee, "I want to go there. What made mother say I mustn't go out again?" He walked back to the parlor. Grandma was still sleeping. He heard nurse singing to baby overhead, and his mother he knew was dressing.

He looked at a picture-book for a few moments, then played with his parlor-ball, but through the front windows Sinny was still in sight.

"I'll just go up a little minute," said Ainslee, "and see what he's doing."

Down the path and out of the front gate he ran. It had rained the day before, and some little pools of water lay along the road side.

"What you doing, Sinny?" called Ainslee.

"Fishin'," said Sinny.

"What for?"

"Tadpoles."

"What's they?" said Ainslee.

"Why, they're tadpoles; pollywogs, mother calls 'em."

"Have you got any?" asked Ainslee.

"No," said Sinny, "not yet. I guess I won't try any more now you've come. Did you know we'd got a new pig?"

"Why, no," said Ainslee, "I didn't know you'd got any pigs."

"Ho!" said Sinny. "Why, we've got 'leven, — only seven of 'em has just come. They're all white 'cept the black one, and gran'ther says I may have it, 'cause it's a runt. Our old cat's got kittens, too. There's three of 'em up in the barn, and they can't one o' them open their eyes."

"Why," said Ainslee.

"'Cause 'tain't time," said Sinny. "'Twon't be for two days. Come and see 'em."

Three kittens who couldn't or wouldn't open their eyes were too great a temptation for Ainslee, and he trotted along by Sinny, till they reached the barn. There the cunning little things so moved him, that they nearly met the fate of the chicky, for he squeezed them till they gave sharp little mews, and the old cat grew quite anxious and carried them off one by one down into the hay under the rafters.

"Let's come and see the pigs now," said Sinny; and so they went down the ladder and out into the barn-yard. Old Peter Smith was at one end, and he looked quite surprised as he saw Sinny's companion.

"What little boy are you?" said he.

"I'm Ainslee Barton," said Ainslee, "and I live down to grandpa's."

"Oh you do — do you?" said old Peter. "You an' Sinny look out, an' not get into mischief."

"I never do such a thing," said Ainslee, walking off after Sinny.

The barn-yard was dirty and his nice boots suffered, but he was too intent on seeing the seven little pigs to think of that. The pig-pen lay at

the farther end of the yard, and a loose board in the side enabled them to climb up and look over. After all it was nicer to hear about than to see, for the pigs were all very dirty, and the smell quite dreadful.

"Pigs are nasty — ain't they, Sinny?" said Ainslee.

"Mostly, I guess," said Sinny; "ours are."

"Was there ever a clean pig?" said Ainslee.

"I do' know," said Sinny. "Gran'ther says that once there was a pig that knowed its letters and could spell *pig*."

"I don't believe it," said Ainslee; "there wasn't ever such a pig."

"There was, too," said Sinny.

"I'll ask mamma if there was."

"My gran'ther knows more than your mamma," said Sinny.

"No he don't," shouted Ainslee, quite red in the face; "he don't know nothin'."

This was too much. Sinny could not stand it, and gave Ainslee a push which, if he had been holding on, would have done no harm. As it was, in his excitement he had let go of the top board, and stood balancing himself on the loose one; and as the push came he wavered a moment, and then fell, heels over head, into the pig-pen.

The old pig had sat astonished through the conversation going on above her, and as Ainslee came tumbling in, seemed to consider him something good to eat, for she stood up and walked slowly toward him.

"Gran'ther! gran'ther!" screamed Sinny. "He's in the pig-pen. Oh, he's in the pig-pen!" Old Peter ran to them. Ainslee, half suffocated, was trying to get to his feet, and the pig was dangerously near. Old Peter caught him, and held him out at arm's length.

"Wall, if I ever!" said he. "You're the boy that don't never get inter mischief; what do ye call this?"

Sinny's mother had run out, as the children screamed, and now came up.

"Mercy on us!" said she, looking at poor Ainslee, streaming with filth and crying miserably. "What ever will I do with him?"

"Put him in a tub, mother," said Sinny; "he did me."

Ainslee was really too dirty to touch, but old Peter said he'd soon fix him, and taking him to the barn-yard pump, he pumped slowly over him till he was somewhat washed off. Then Sinny's mother pulled off his clothes and threw them into a pail, and picking him up, carried him into the house.

"You couldn't get Sinny's clothes on anyhow," said she, "for you're as fat as he's lean, so I'll just have to take you home in a shawl."

So down the road presently a procession went. Nancy with Ainslee wrapped in a shawl, and looking too ashamed to hold up his head, and Sinny following in the rear, crying for sorrow and sympathy. Grandma and mother both met them at the door.

"Well, if ever I did!" said grandma. "What that child will do next is past telling."

Somebody's strong arms took Ainslee and carried him up to the nursery. He knew in a moment that it must be Uncle Ainslee, for father was not there, and grandpa never carried him, because he had rheumatism. Whoever it was went right out, however, and Ainslee was left alone. It seemed a long while before anybody came. He heard children's voices and wondered who they were, and the smell of green peas came up, and made him remember how hungry he was. By and by the door opened and mother came in. She looked quite sad, and Ainslee began to cry.

"I didn't mean to run away, mamma," he said, "but I couldn't help it. Grandma was asleep, and I got so lonesome, and there wasn't anything but a fly to play with."

"And do you always mean to do what you

want instead of what mamma tells you?" said his mother.

"No, oh no!" sobbed Ainslee. "I will mind, but I do smell so bad."

"You must have another bath," said his mother, "but you have only one of your morning suits to put on, because you have soiled all your others. You may come down to dinner when you are clean."

"Don't tell 'em I tumbled," said Ainslee.

"They all know," said his mother; "for Sinny's mother told me before them. Sinny was a good boy, and took all the blame of your fall. His mother said she should whip him, but I told her you had been more naughty than he, and that your fright had been sufficient punishment for both."

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and nurse came in in a hurry. She doused him into the water, and brushed his hair very hard, but Ainslee felt too ashamed to object to anything. But when he looked at the coarse linen suit lying on the bed, he did feel tried.

"Are there any little boys down-stairs, Jane?" he asked.

"One," said Jane.

"What's he got on?"

"White clothes like those you lent the pigs."

"Are there any little girls?"

"One."

"Oh dear!" said Ainslee, beginning to cry again. "I don't want to wear my hateful old clothes, and I haven't got any but copper-toed shoes. Go 'way Jane. I won't have on the ugly things."

"Then you shouldn't a-put your best ones in the pig-pen," said nurse.

Ainslee wanted to slap her, but a sudden feeling of how really naughty he had been came over him. Baby cried out just then, and nurse left him hastily.

"I can't go down looking so," said Ainslee, who thought a good deal of nice clothes. "There's everybody down there; and they'll all know I spoiled my best clothes in the pig-pen, an' I don't want to see 'em."

Voices came up from the dining-room, and he heard the children laughing.

"I wish I was a little pig," said Ainslee, "then I wouldn't care how I looked."

Suddenly his face brightened. "I'm going to be good inside, if I ain't pretty outside," said he.

He put on his clothes and pushed into the copper-toes himself, so that nurse had little to do when she came back. Then he went bravely down the stairs, and on to the dining-room door,

where he stood, looking so good and sweet, that Grandpa Walton caught him and gave him a hug. Then Ainslee saw a pair of very bright brown eyes looking at him, and was sure it was Uncle Ainslee. Mamma had kept a seat for him, and this tall gentleman lifted him into it, and kissed him, as he passed him on.

There were several strangers, but Ainslee felt too hungry to think about anything else just then. By and by he raised his eyes to find the two children opposite looking at him very hard.

"Who are they?" he whispered to his mother.

"Uncle John's two children, John and Lizzie," said his mother.

Ainslee felt too shy to say anything then, but after dinner, before he really knew it, they were talking together on the piazza, and he was giving them a full and particular account of all he had been doing. Soon Uncle Ainslee and mamma came walking out, and then Ainslee looking up, said, "Do tell us a story, Uncle Ainslee."

"Well, really!" said Uncle Ainslee, "I've left part of my stories in California and part in China, and I don't believe I've brought home one."

"Oh yes, you have!" said Ainslee, "because mamma said she guessed you'd tell us one to-night."

"Oh, she did — did she?" said Uncle Ainslee; "then she must tell one first."

So mamma told a short story, and then Uncle Ainslee, leaning back in his camp chair, began, but for what he told you must look in the next chapter.

II.

UNCLE AINSLEE'S SQUIRREL STORY.

FAR up in the top of the tallest tree you can see in the wood, began Uncle Ainslee, there lived once a red squirrel. He was a great-great-grandson of that very squirrel I used to read about, who went off to see the world, and got picked up and carried away by a hawk. This sad event made such an impression on all the family, that the story was told to every child and grandchild, so that all of them became almost afraid of their shadows, and always had a crick in their necks from looking up to see if a hawk were coming.

Our squirrel was one of a very large family, who, as they grew old enough not to feel afraid, had one after another left for other trees, till he only remained at home. Naturally of a very timid and gentle disposition, he seldom went out alone; and so when after a time both father and mother died he shut himself up in his hole, and grew quite thin for want of exercise.

One morning he put his head out of the hole,

feeling very forlorn and lonesome. The sun was shining gloriously, and Mrs. Robin, who had a nest on the branch below, sat on the smallest twig on the end, swinging and swaying and singing, as if she were crazy.

"There's no hawk there, I'm sure," said Mr. Squirrel, and he ran down a little way.

"Why, Mr. Squirrel!" said Mrs. Robin, "I thought you had gone away."

"Oh no, indeed," said Mr. Squirrel; "I never should think of such a thing. How good the sun feels!" and he gave a little jump of delight.

"Why do you stay in your hole all the time?" said Mrs. Robin.

"Because I am afraid to come out," said Mr. Squirrel, "and there's lots in there to eat yet."

"I wouldn't live on last year's nuts," said Mrs. Robin, "when there are fresh strawberries not a dozen trees off."

Mr. Squirrel looked thoughtful.

"That's very true, Mrs. Robin," said he; "but suppose I'm snapped up by the same hawk that carried off my great-grandfather?"

"Ah!" said she. "But you know there are no hawks now to speak of. I'm an old bird, a good deal older than you, and I've never seen one yet. If your great-grandfather hadn't been

wandering in the open fields, he would never have been carried off. Any squirrel could get away from a dozen hawks, by running into any one of the holes close by." Here Mrs. Robin shook her head, and began her song again, but just then spying a lovely green caterpillar climbing up the tree, she flew down to get it for her nest full of young ones.

Mr. Squirrel ran back to his hole, to think the matter over. It was really very dingy in there. The bed and bedroom were in sad disorder, for the moss sheets had not been changed for nobody could tell how long a time, and he had piled up nutshells till hardly a ray of light could get in.

"I'll clean house, I think," said he. So he pitched out all the old shells, and sent all the musty moss flying after.

"Now," said he, "I'll get some more."

So, forgetting altogether that he had gone home to think about matters, he raced down the tree, and off to the edge of the brook where grew such green moss as never was seen. Mr. Squirrel stood on a stone just at the edge, and drank some water. As he did so, he saw himself plainly, as if it had been a looking-glass.

"My gracious!" said Mr. Squirrel, "can this be me?" and indeed there was reason for asking. Bits of dead moss were all through his

hair, his face was dirty, and his tail in a perfect tangle, with a burr stuck on the end.

"I must look better than this," said Mr. Squirrel, "before I do another thing."

So he darted home as fast as he could go, washed his face, and combed his hair and tail with his little paws till they shone. Then he ran down to the brook again.

"If I were only a little fatter," said Mr. Squirrel, "I should be almost as good looking as my father. I must eat more. How nice it is to be clean again; I really believe I don't feel half as much afraid as I did when I was dirty."

With that he pulled off the fresh moss as much as he could carry, and ran back and forth in this way to the tree, till he made a delightful bed, and his house was in perfect order.

"Now," said Mr. Squirrel, "I've earned a good supper, and I'll have strawberries."

So he scampered off to the foot of a great oak, where he had often been for them with an older brother, who was gone now, he could not tell where. There they were red and ripe, and Mr. Squirrel had such an appetite that he came very near being greedy and making himself sick. Just as he was about to take one too much, such a beautiful little squirrel came running to the old oak, that he dropped his berry and sat star-

ing at her. Her eyes were bright as black beads, and her tail was so fine and bushy that it quite covered her back when she sat up to eat her berry. Mr. Squirrel would have spoken, but feeling very bashful, he ran home as fast as he could go. Mrs. Robin spoke as he passed her nest. It was twilight now, and she was chirping a little soft chirp to the wee birdies under her wing.

"How nice you look," she said. "Do get fat, and you'll be the best looking squirrel about here."

Mr. Squirrel slept better that night than he had for a long time, and was on the very tip-top of the tree before sunrise, whisking from one limb to another, and wondering why he had not given himself this good time before. Mrs. Robin, who was having an early breakfast, flew up just then with a small black bug in her bill, and handed it to her oldest. There was such a chirping for another, that Mr. Squirrel thought he could not stand such a noise, and almost made up his mind to tell Mrs. Robin that she must keep the children more quiet. Then he remembered what a noise he had been making himself, chattering as loud as he could while he jumped about, and so he ran off to the old oak-tree without saying a word. There sat

Miss Squirrel, holding a big red berry in her dainty little paws.

"Good morning!" said Mr. Squirrel; and then, quite in a tremble to think how bold he had been, turned about and raced home without a single berry.

Back in his house eating a musty nut, things seemed quite dismal, and Mrs. Robin coming up to make a short call, wondered at his sad face.

"Don't come in," said Mr. Squirrel. "You'll be more comfortable outside on a twig, and I'll sit in the door and talk to you."

So he told her of his meeting with little Miss Squirrel; how charming she was, and how much he wanted to talk to her, but had been so bashful, he had only dared to say "Good morning."

"My house is in beautiful order," said he; "big enough for ten, and how nice it would be to get in our winter nuts together, instead of all alone; yet I 'm afraid to ask her if she'll come."

"Wait awhile," said Mrs. Robin, "and let me think it over."

So she rocked back and forth on her twig, and sang a little as she always did when she wanted to compose her mind, and then at last she flew right away without another word.

What did she do, but fly at once to Miss

Squirrel, who sat in her house not a dozen trees off.

"My dear," said Mrs. Robin, "life is very short, you know, and I'm sure you'll be more comfortable in a nice tree near me, than here all alone. There is not a better squirrel in the whole wood, and I'm sure if he were not so bashful, he would come and tell you himself how anxious he is that you should marry him, and come and live in his tree."

"Dear me!" said Miss Squirrel; "it's very sudden."

"I know it is," said Mrs. Robin; "but where's the use of wasting time? He loves you dearly, and you will him;" and off she flew.

All this time Mrs. Robin had not once said who "he" was, but Miss Squirrel knew very well, and sat still thinking about it. Getting thirsty after a while, she ran down her tree for a berry. As it happened, Mr. Squirrel, being thirsty too, had started out for the same purpose, and both met under a big root.

"Oh!" said Mr. Squirrel; and "My gracious!" said Miss Squirrel; and then they both looked at each other.

"Will you?" said Mr. Squirrel.

"I will!" said Miss Squirrel, without waiting a minute, and then they rubbed noses, for that

is the way they kiss in Squirrel Land. Then they each took a berry, and running home to Mr. Squirrel's tree, went up to the branch opposite his hole, and ate them.

Mrs. Robin, perfectly delighted, sat below, and looked up at them, singing such a song that the leaves were quite excited, and whispered to each other that something more than common must be the matter.

"You'll never leave me — will you?" said Mr. Squirrel.

"No," said Miss Squirrel, "only to get my winter things, — my checkerberries, you know, that I'd packed away in moss."

So they ran back to her tree, and spent the rest of the day in moving the best nuts and berries, and so little Miss Squirrel changed into Mrs. Squirrel, and both began housekeeping together.

I could not begin to tell you all the good times they had, for it might take all night, and perhaps all next day too. Tiny little squirrels came, grew up, and left the home tree for another, but Mrs. Squirrel could jump as far and as high as the quickest of her children, and laid in a wonderful store of nuts every fall. Mrs. Robin builded her nest each year, and sang sweetly every morning, and Mr. Squirrel grew feebler.

He gathered fewer nuts, slept many hours longer by day, and grew fonder and fonder of telling stories of his early life.

One morning Mrs. Squirrel did not get up; she had a bad headache, she said, and must keep still. Mr. Squirrel sat in the door and warned off all the visitors, and they had a great many, for they were a very sociable family. By and by, looking in and seeing her fast asleep, he thought a fresh checkerberry would be the very thing for her, and so started down the tree to get it. He went slowly, for his legs were quite stiff now in the morning, and he never thought of jumping before noon, when they began to be more limber. Only a little way from the spot where the berries were thickest, sat a square box; in it lay delicious looking nuts, and Mr. Squirrel, never suspecting anything, and only thinking what a treat he could carry poor Mrs. Squirrel, walked in and picked up one. Click! went something behind him, and turning, he saw a set of wires where the door had been. Poor Squirrel! he bit and tore at them in vain, and finally, all faint and exhausted, lay down and wished he could die. Soon there were steps and voices. Mr. Squirrel knew very well what it meant, for long, long ago, a friend of one of his cousins had been caught in a trap and carried away by a bad boy.

"Poor little squirrel!" said a gentle voice over him. "I'd let you out if I could, but Tom won't let me."

"No, I guess Tom won't," said a voice. "I'm going to have him in a cage, with a big wheel, and teach him to come when I call."

Alas! for Mr. Squirrel! Tom carried him home, and an elegant tin house was provided, with four rooms, a circular staircase, and a large wheel, but only one of all these would Mr. Squirrel use. Into the bedroom he dragged every bit of cotton and wool furnished him, and then rolling himself up in a round ball, lay day after day and thought of poor Mrs. Squirrel. Sometimes the children poked him out with a stick, and then he looked at them so sadly and forlornly that little Mary's heart was quite broken.

"He's a hateful old thing," said Tom one day, "and getting thin just to spite me."

"Poke him into the wheel," said Mary. "Maybe he'll like to run round."

So the two pushed and poked, till Mr. Squirrel was in the wheel, but run round he would not. Tom, very angry, gave the cage a push which threw it to the floor. Tom did not notice, as he picked up scattered nuts and bits of cloth, that one bar in the door had flown out, but Mr.

Squirrel saw it the very minute he came to his senses.

"I do really think," said he, "that I've got thin enough to squeeze through there."

Half an hour later, Tom, coming into the room, caught a glimpse of a bushy tail disappearing through the open window.

"Oh!" said he; "can that be our squirrel?" Sure enough it was.

"I don't care," said Tom; "he wasn't any good;" and so the matter ended. Whether he reached home safely or not, you will soon see. In the mean time I will tell you how poor Mrs. Squirrel fared.

Fast asleep when Mr. Squirrel went out for his checkerberry, she soon awoke, and feeling better, went to the door and looked out. Mrs. Robin was hopping up from twig to twig.

"Where's my husband?" said Mrs. Squirrel.

"Why, isn't he at home?" asked Mrs. Robin.

"No," answered Mrs. Squirrel, and then, quite anxious, sat down in the door to watch. By and by there was a rustling, but it was only Little Squirrel, the last one at home. So the two sat and waited till night came, and then went to bed sad.

Days and days passed, and no Mr. Squirrel came. Little Squirrel had always had very poor health, and though their stock of nuts and berries ran low, he looked for no fresh ones; so Mrs. Squirrel worked harder than ever, and each night said, "I think Mr. Squirrel will come to-morrow."

Mrs. Robin shook her head, and said to herself, "He'll never come back; but it is just as well she should keep busy, for that shiftless Little Squirrel will never do anything."

One day there came walking through the wood a man with a gun on his shoulder. Nobody had ever fired a gun in those woods, and Mrs. Squirrel ran back and forth with her berries fearlessly.

"Ha!" said the man; "there's a fat one!" and he fired.

Little Squirrel eating nuts in the hole, heard a noise. "It's thundering," said he, and went on eating. By and by he heard a little faint sound at the bottom of the tree, and he went out, and down to the end of the bough where Mrs. Robin lived. Looking from it to the ground, he saw her standing perfectly still over some little red lump. He ran fast down to it. Ah! how dreadful! A shot had broken Mrs. Squirrel's leg, and she lay there all bloody without stirring. He thought she was dead.

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried he; "there won't be anybody to get my nuts."

"Hush about your nuts," said Mrs. Robin, "and go for Dr. Owl fast as ever you can."

Dr. Owl would not come at first, because the sun hurt his eyes, and made him wink so hard that he was sure he could not see her long enough at a time to do any good. Finally he did, however, and between them they carried poor Mrs. Squirrel to her bed, and there she lay for many, many days. She was so old that Dr. Owl said her bones did not join well, and then she was always worrying about Mr. Squirrel, till she grew so thin that nobody knew her.

She lay one day, aching and miserable, when a shadow passed between her and the light, and a squirrel came in, old, and gray, and thin, and almost dead. For just a moment Mrs. Squirrel looked, and then she knew Mr. Squirrel.

He lay down by her on the moss, and cuddled up close.

Then they kept very still, for they were too glad to say one word. They had lived their life through, and all their last strength had gone in waiting. So when, after a time, Mrs. Robin and Dr. Owl came up together, there was nothing more to do, for little Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel had shut their bright eyes, and laid down their little

heads for the last time, and they would never raise them again.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Robin, crying, "there'll never be such another pair in this tree, and not one left that's fit to take their place."

Then she sent to all the birds and all the squirrels, and they tolled the bluebells and the wild harebells, that grew on the rocks, and there was mourning in Squirrel Land and in Bird Land. And by and by they made a little nest for them, under the great roots of the old oak, where they had first met, and one day, they carried them to it and laid them softly in. Then the Sand Martin shut them in with a clay covering, so that nothing could harm or reach them more, and there they left them. And this story is told by one who knows the language of Bird Land and of Squirrel Land; and this is the end.

III.

CULLIGAN.

"SPECKLE'S a wicked hen," said Ainslee, coming in a few days after the squirrel story had been told. "She's a drefful wicked hen. See what she did, mamma," and Ainslee opened his hand, and showed a little yellow chicken, with bloody head and closed eyes.

"That isn't one of Speckle's chickens," said grandma; "it's a week younger than her's if it's a day. How came it with Speckle's?"

"I looked at Speckle," Ainslee said. "I looked into the coop, an' her eyes shined at me. I thought she was lonesome, 'cause I'd squeezed one o' her chickens all to deff, an' I took one o' the white hen's chickies, an' put it close to her, an' she bited it most to deff, grandma."

"Didn't you know any better than that?" asked grandma. "There's some hens might take a strange chicken and keep it, but Speckle isn't one of that sort. Don't ever do such a thing again, unless you want to kill every chicken we've got."

"I don't," said Ainslee. "This chickey isn't dead; it kicks just a speck, grandma. Can't I have it?"

"Yes," grandma said, walking away, while mamma took the little downy thing into her hands.

"We'll put it in a basket, on some cotton," she said, "and perhaps it will get well by and by."

Ainslee ran for his little basket, and after the cotton had been put in, made a nest in it for the chicken, and set it before the fire, and then stood near for a time to keep pussy away, while mamma went back to grandma's room. He was hot with playing, and soon, between the fire and the sun, which poured in at the window, grew so much hotter, he did not know what to do. Ann came in with a pail of water, and looked surprised to see him standing still by the stove, with big drops of perspiration chasing one another over his nose.

"For the land's sake, what you roasting yourself alive for?" she said, setting down the pail with a thump. "I should think you'd be hot enough running."

"I am," said Ainslee, turning around. "I'm most all choked; but then if I go away the chickey'll get eaten up, maybe. Pussy keeps a-smellin' so."

"Shut her up," said Ann. "Put her in the meal-room, an' maybe she'll get a mouse. I saw one there this morning."

Pussy must have understood what was said, for as Ainslee started after her, she walked under the sink, quite behind the waste pipe, and dabbed at his hand with her sharp claws every time he reached forward.

"I can't get her," he said at last, "an' I'm hotter'n hotter every minute."

"Give her this an' she'll come out fast enough," said Ann, handing him a bit of cheese-rind, which brought pussy out the moment she smelled it. Ainslee lugged her into the meal-room, a sort of long closet, with small covered bins on one side, where rye, Indian meal, and such things were kept. A mouse scampered across the shelf as the door opened, and pussy, whose tail grew as big as three, the minute she spied it, dropped the cheese and whisked after it. Ainslee stood still, long enough to see the tip end of the mouse's tail going into a hole, and pussy's paw almost on it, and then shut the door and went back to the chicken, which was holding up its head a little, and trying to look over the edge of the basket.

"I guess it's hungry," he said. "Let me have some breffas for it, Ann."

Ann gave him a little meal and water in a cup,

and Ainslee put some before the chicken, which took no notice of it.

"It isn't hungry a bit," he said, looking disappointed. "Oh, there's Sinny! Sinny, this chickey won't eat a bit."

"What chickey?" said Sinny, coming into the kitchen, and Ainslee told him how it happened to be there.

"They picks up bugs, mostly," said Sinny. "Them's what the old hen scratches up for 'em, you know. Let's us get some."

So the two went out to the side of the barn where all the coops stood, and watched for a little while, to find out just what bugs were scratched up, but could not very well see, because whenever they tried to get near, the old hen, the only one out with a brood, clucked fiercely, and looked as if she meant to fly at them.

"I'm tired o' waiting," said Ainslee at last. "I'm goin' to get a speckled worm off the fennel. I saw some there a little while ago. Maybe they've crawled away, though."

Sinny ran on before him, but stopped at the asparagus-bed.

"Here's a first-rate one," he said, picking it up; "real slim, so't the chickey can swallow it easy."

"Come along then," said Ainslee, taking it

from Sinny; and going at once to the kitchen, he put it down in the basket, out of which the worm began to crawl, as if it knew the best thing to be done was to get away as fast as possible.

"Look a-here," Sinny said, stopping it; "that ain't the way you've got to go. Let's put it in the chickey's mouth, 'cause, you see, if we don't, it'll get out-doors right away."

"Well," said Ainslee; "only look out not to touch its sore head," and he pulled open the chicken's bill, while Sinny put in the little worm, which hung half in and half out, as the bill shut again.

"What are you doing, children?" said mamma, who just then went through the room.

"Givin' the chickey things it loves," Ainslee answered; "but it won't eat."

"I should think not," said mamma. "It is sick now, and wants nothing but to be let alone. Run away with your worm, and I will see that chickey is taken care of myself."

Mamma hung the little basket on a nail near the window, so that even if pussy came out, there would be hardly any danger of her getting it, and Ainslee and Sinny walked back to the garden, where Mr. Culligan was busy weeding the onion and beet beds, throwing the weeds into the path behind him as he worked. There was quite a

pile already, and Sinny whispered something as he looked at them, which must have been "wheel-barrow," for the next moment Ainslee said, —

"You goin' to put 'em in the wheelbarrow pretty soon, Mr. Culligan?"

"Yes an' I am," said Mr. Culligan. "You throw thim in if I bring it along, an' maybe I'll be givin' you a ride."

"That's just what I kept a-wishin' you'd say," said Ainslee, jumping up and down, and Culligan, in a few moments, brought the wheelbarrow from a side path, and the children picked up the weeds and threw them in. There was really no need of carrying them away till the barrow was full; but Culligan, who was ready to do anything for Ainslee that could be done, and who said he was "intirely the finest o' all the grandchildren," stopped very soon, and said, "Now, in with yees; it's in the barn-yard they've got to go."

"Then drive us through the barn," said Ainslee, tumbling in, and though there was the little gate wide open at the back of the barn-yard, so that one minute would have brought them to it, Culligan mumbled something about not stopping to undo the back gate, and, turning his head carefully so that he could not see it, went around through the carriage-gate, and in at the great front door of the barn, and so out to the yard.

"An' did you iver?" he said, as he dumped children and weeds together in one corner. "If there isn't the back gate open afther all, an' me a-ridin' yees all the way round, whin the day's hotter'n blazes."

"You knowed it every minute," said Ainslee, jumping up; "only you wasn't goin' to tell. Ain't you fust-rate?"

"It's stoppin' me wurruk you are," said Culligan, shaking his head. "Be off wid yees," and lifting up his hoe he chased them about the garden, till, quite tired out with running and laughing, they sat down on the shady bank where the Stars of Bethlehem grew in the early spring, and watched the weeding, which went on fast now, to make up for lost time. You will hear of Culligan every now and then as these stories go on, and so I will tell you now who he was, and what place he held at Grandpa Walton's.

Years and years ago, when mamma was quite a little girl, he had come to Windsor, a young Irishman, fresh from the old country, and among the first of the many thousands who, since then, have crossed the wide water, which separates America from Europe. How he had wandered from Boston, where the ship came in, to this spot far up among the Green Mountains, he hardly knew himself, except that no work could be found

in Boston, and somebody had told him farmers in the country might hire him. So from one village to another he had journeyed on with his young wife, growing more and more discouraged as he found nothing to do, till at last, late one afternoon, riding home from Cornish, grandpa saw the couple turn away from a house near the bridge, and sit down on a log, as if there was nothing more to hope for. Irishmen were a new thing then, and no farmer or farmer's wife wanted a "furriner" about, and Culligan sat with his head bent down, while his wife, with her apron over her face, cried silently.

"What is the trouble?" grandpa asked, stopping before them, and though Culligan's brogue was not very easy to understand, he soon knew the whole story, and then stopped to think a few moments, looking at them the while. Both had good faces, and grandpa determined that he would, at least, help them a little in the effort to earn an honest living.

"Come home with me to-night," he said, "and I will see that you have a bed, and something to eat;" and he rode slowly along, while the two followed, pouring out a flood of the warm-hearted, grateful words, Irish people know so well how to speak.

Grandma liked them quite as well as grandpa,

and so it happened that the room over the carriage-house was finally given up to them, and both stayed on. Culligan proved to be a very good gardener, though he knew nothing whatever about anything else. Both were anxious to learn, and so of course did, as everybody can who goes to work with a will, and before a year had passed, grandpa said he should be as sorry to part with them, as he had been to think of taking them.

The room over the carriage-house was exchanged for a little house down in the meadow. Children came, and grew up in the quiet town, going to school, and gaining an education, of which Culligan was proud enough, though he himself could barely read and write. Out of the nine, three boys were in good trades, one apprenticed to a carpenter, and the others, both boys and girls, still at home, all promising to do as well as the elder ones.

Culligan had never lost the brogue, and, as he was growing old, probably never would; but his wife, from many years of going about as washerwoman, had grafted on her original language a wonderful stock of Yankeeisms, while the children were all growing up to speak quite as good English as the majority of those who went to district school.

Culligan still had a little sore feeling against Americans, and sometimes spoke his mind when asked why he would never work for anybody but Grandpa Walton.

"In the time o' my nade," he said, "whin I came sore futted, an' sorer hearted to the town, there was niver a one to give bite nor sup, nor the chance of wurruk to an honest man. Hard-hearted ye were, an' there is not one among ye that's the gintleman an' the Christian like the Squire. May the blissid saints make his bed in glory!"

Knowing all the family for the last twenty years, you can see that Culligan was quite an important person at grandpa's, and though his day's works grew shorter and shorter, grandpa never would hint that they might be longer. Ainslee had been two or three times to see "Mrs. Cully," as he called her, and, if Sinny had not been so near, would probably have become very intimate with little Pat, the smallest of all the Culligans. The little house in the meadow had gone to pieces long ago; but its place had been filled by a very nice one the boys had helped to build, and which stood on the same spot as the old one. Ainslee had heard some of this from Ann, and some from Culligan himself; but would have liked him all the same, probably, if he

had only been there one year instead of twenty, so long as he did pretty much everything that was asked him, and once in a while, when smoking his pipe, told wonderful stories about the "ould counthry."

Mamma called, as Ainslee and Sinny sat on the bank, and both ran in, to find that something had happened, about which I shall tell you in another chapter.

IV.

CHICKEN LITTLE.

Uncle Ainslee stood by the window, where the little basket had been hung, and mamma by him; and as Ainslee came in, he saw that basket and cotton were on the floor, and the chicken in Uncle Ainslee's hand.

"Oh, what is it?" he said; and then almost cried as he looked at the chicken's little legs, one of which hung by a bit of skin just ready to break. "Now it's deaded, I know. Who did do it?"

"Pussy, after all," mamma answered. "Somebody opened the meal-room door, and pussy saw the basket stirring, I suppose, and must have jumped from the sink, and struck it with her paw, till she knocked it from the nail. I came out just in time to find chickey struggling to get away, and pussy holding it by this poor little leg, which, Uncle Ainslee says, must be cut off."

Ainslee cried now in good earnest, till his uncle said, "The chicken won't die, I think, and

I shall tie up the stump nicely till it is all well, and then, perhaps, make a wooden leg."

"Like Jim Field's, down in the village?" said Ainslee, smiling a little.

"Not quite so big," Uncle Ainslee answered.

"But maybe the chickey'll die before it can get on the leg," Ainslee said, looking sober again.

"No, I guess not," Uncle Ainslee said, taking out his penknife, and cutting the bit of skin which held the leg. "People who go through a great many adventures and hair-breadth escapes often live longer than those who stay quietly at home; and this chicken, having had all her troubles early in life, will very likely be a great-great-grandmother, and see dozens of her descendants made into chicken pies."

Mamma had brought some soft rags, and as Uncle Ainslee talked, he tied up the leg, and laid the chicken back in the basket.

"Don't put it here again," said Ainslee, "'cause pussy'll get it right away, if you do."

"No," said Uncle Ainslee, "I'll take it to my room, for I shall want to watch the leg for the next day or two. When people break their legs, you know, or have them bitten off by some dreadful wild animal, they must lie in bed, and have the doctor come every day till they get well."

Uncle Ainslee walked away, and up to his room, and Ainslee followed, and watched till the chicken had been put on a table in the corner, and then went down to talk the matter over with grandma, while Sinny walked home.

Two or three days went by, and the chicken, which grandma had said to herself could not and would not live, though she had not told Ainslee so, not only lived, but seemed to improve each day. It could not walk, of course, with only one leg, but the stump of the other was healing nicely, and the chicken's little, bright eyes looked about quite fearlessly, at the many children who went in and out, and it ate all the stirabout Uncle Ainslee thought good for it.

Every day Ainslee asked at breakfast, "You goin' to make the leg to-day, uncle?" and every day, for nearly a week, was answered, "Not quite yet," till he began to think the chicken would be an old hen, before she walked again. At last one afternoon, Ainslee — who had been up-stairs for some time, looking at a great book, filled with pictures, which he was allowed to take from the shelves himself, whether Uncle Ainslee was in the room or not — heard his quick, firm step on the stairs. In a moment he came in, tossing his cap to the bed, and sitting down by the table where chickey was tied into

the basket, and giving a peep, now and then, as she tried to get out.

"Oh! you goin' to make the leg now?" said Ainslee, shutting the book and running to the table. "I didn't believe you ever would. Why didn't you before?"

"Because the stump was not entirely well," Uncle Ainslee answered, beginning to cut and shape a bit of wood in his hand. "If I had made the leg and fastened it on tight enough to make it stay, it would have hurt the chicken so that she couldn't walk, perhaps; but now I don't think it will. We'll see, at any rate."

Ainslee looked on till the piece of wood had taken shape, — quite a respectable claw on the end. Then Uncle Ainslee took the string off the basket, and, lifting chickey out, set the little stump into the place made for it in the top of the new leg, putting a bit of cotton wool in first. Then he wound a strip of soft rag carefully around it a great many times, sewed the end carefully down with a needle and thread, he took from the pincushion, and set the chicken on the table. How queer it did look! So queer that Ainslee began to laugh, and laughed on harder and harder, as chickey, who had at first stood still, probably dizzy from being in bed so long, took

one step. and then looked down to find out why one foot made so much more noise than another; then took one more, and at last walked all around the table, clickity-click, helping herself along with her wings, when the new leg did not work well.

"Just a speck too long," said Uncle Ainslee, picking her up, and cutting at the claw. "Now it's all right, I think," and setting her down again, chickey went bravely around once more; and, stopping at the saucer of water, dipped her little beak in it, and looked up at the ceiling afterwards, just as any well brought up chicken would have done.

"Well, if I ever!" said grandma, who had come in. "You don't mean to say that chicken's really walking? I don't believe the other chickens will let that stay on its leg."

"Let's see," said Ainslee. "Come quick, grandma, an' we'll all look. Come, mamma. The chickey 's got a be-*yu*-tiful new leg, an' its mother won't know it. Come along, do!"

Quite a procession followed Uncle Ainslee and the chicken, to the side of the barn, where the coops were. Nurse was curious, as well as Ann, and Grandpa Walton was pulled along, declaring he never had heard of such a thing, and if the chicken grew as fast as its brothers and sisters, it would want a new leg every day.

Uncle Ainslee set it down before the coop, among the other nine, and then drew back a little with the others, to see what would be done.

Our chickey seemed to know the old home at once, and ran through the slats to Mrs. White Hen, who was sitting still in the corner, cooling off, after a violent scratch for bugs in the beet bed, and at first appeared to know the new-comer, and lifted one wing a little, as if inviting her to come under and take a nap. Chickey knew that feathers were a deal nicer than even the best of cotton wool, in the reddest of baskets, and started forward, hippity hop, to the old place. Mrs. White Hen rose up suddenly, and looked sharply down at the curious leg. No chicken of hers had ever tumbled out of the egg in that shape, and yet the face certainly was familiar. She touched her bill to the lump of rag. Nothing like any of *her* family about that; and Mrs. White Hen, making up her mind some impudent chicken was trying to impose upon her, dabbed at our poor little one's head with her sharp beak; and would soon have made an end of her, had not Uncle Ainslee sprung forward, and caught her in his hand.

"What an old heathen," he said, "not to know her own child. What shall we do about it?"

"I told you so," said grandma. "It's got to

stay in the house, and next thing, the cat'll eat it."

"She sha'n't," said Ainslee. "That's a wicked hen. She ought to be boiled right away, grandma, so's not to live any longer. She don't love her own little chickey."

"She doesn't think it *is* hers," said mamma; "that is the trouble. She doesn't want a stranger in the place of her own little ones. Wooden legs are something new in Hen Land; and all we can do is to care for poor chickey ourselves."

So our chicken went back to the house, to stay there till old enough to fight its own battles, and was offered to nurse, who declined the gift, and then to Ann, who said she could not and would not be bothered with it, but at last agreed to help Ainslee in fighting off Ponto and Pussy.

Ponto soon learned that here was something to be let alone; and chickey, after a time, lost all fear, and pecked daintily at whatever happened to be in his pan, while Ponto rolled his eyes and shook himself, as if to say, "What a jolly time I'd have, if I only dared."

Pussy learned more slowly, and for a long time, even with the switch in plain sight, whenever chickey was near, her eyes grew green, and her tail swelled up, just as if she saw a mouse. At last, however, making up her mind it was

just lost time to get so excited over a thing she could not have, she shut her eyes, and made believe she could not see, no matter how close by chickey was.

Uncle Ainslee had named it Miss Flite,—some of you will know why, and those of you who do not, must ask,—and Miss Flite grew so well acquainted with everybody, and was always to be found in such unexpected places, that grandma said she was the greatest plague that even Ainslee had ever brought into the house. Every day she grew, too, so that several legs had to be made, just as grandpa had said. Do what they would, though, she never joined the other hens and chickens, except for a few moments at a time; and no matter how far away Ainslee carried her, always came, half hobbling, half flying, back again. Ainslee talked of taking her home to New York in the fall, and keeping her in the back yard, and had even planned the sort of house to be built for her, when something happened, which put an end to all planning.

Miss Flite, grown now to a good-sized pullet, sat one afternoon in the sun, on the door step. Ponto lay asleep behind her. Ann had gone up to her own room, and Ainslee was at Sinny's, doing all the mischief two heads could plan. Up to the gate drove a tin-peddler's wagon, under which ran along a small black dog.

The peddler came two or three times a year to grandpa's, and having come from the same town as grandma, she always bought something of him.

So, to-day, he walked in, followed by the black dog, who pricked up his ears, and rushed at Miss Flite directly. Ponto was either too sleepy to interfere, or was rather glad to have some other dog do what he had been longing to be about for such a while. At any rate he lay still, only opening just one eye, to see the fun; and our chicken, who had come to think all dogs were like Ponto, and so did not move, was caught up, and shaken almost to bits. The peddler called the black dog off, but too late for little Miss Flite, who never held up her head again. She was not strong, you know, and could never have scratched for a living; but for all that, everybody was very, very sorry, that the poor little thing should die in such a way. Ainslee buried her by the other chicken, that same afternoon, and then, going into the summer-house, cried for a few minutes, till Uncle Ainslee came out and sat down by him.

"I keep feelin' dreffful bad, every minute," he said presently. "You said Miss Flite might live to see her grandfather made into chicken pie; an' she didn't. I wish you'd tell me a story."

"About her grandfather?" asked Uncle Ainslee.

"About a bumble-bee," said Ainslee, turning to look at a great fellow, which had just settled down on a white clover; "I should think a bumble-bee would make a beautiful story."

"Perhaps it would," said Uncle Ainslee. "I'll tell you something which came into my mind, when I was watching a big spider this morning."

And Uncle Ainslee began the story you will find in another chapter.

V.

THE BUMBLE-BEE STORY.

Down in the meadow, under a very large root of grass, lived a young Bumble-bee, only one season old, who thought that he knew more than his mother and all his uncles and aunts put together. Mrs. Bumble-bee, his mother, was the steadiest kind of a bee, who had made her house under the root, and brought up great families of young Bumble-bees, all of whom now had nests of their own, and were going on just like their mother, except this one, who made her more trouble than any fifty of her other children.

Day after day she flew to the best clover tops, and brought home the clearest honey that ever was seen; and day after day, young Bumble-bee refused to go with her, and buzzed about the door till she came home, when he was very ready to eat full half the day's work.

"There is something quite out of the common way about me," he would say, sticking his legs into the honey. "Some day I know I shall do something that nobody would have thought of,

and then, perhaps, I shall have a glass house like the Honey-bee."

"You'll never have anything, if you don't go to work," his mother used to say; but Bumble-bee never minded, and did nothing all day but wish he was something different. He was very intimate with his cousin, the Carpenter-bee, who lived in a fine house in one of the boards on the barn, which his wife had lined with rose-leaves, to make a soft bed for her little ones, and he never went there without wishing he had been born in a board, instead of down in the ground among the bugs. The Black Cricket, who lived next door under a stone, made fun of him; and the Burying-beetle said he would come to some bad end surely, and if he did, he knew what their business was, and they should do their duty by him.

As the summer went on, the white-faced hornets came, and Bumble-bee envied them, and wished he had been made to eat the sunny side of pears and plums. Sometimes, too, he looked in at the glass houses, where the little honey-bees worked all day long, and wished he had been born there. One of the drones invited him in one day, showed him the beautiful white combs, and said that he had all to eat that he could hold, and never did a thing. After this, Bumble-bee hung about the hive every day, wishing he were a

drone, till one morning, flying up from the meadow, he met his mother going home in a great hurry.

"What's the matter?" said he.

"Go on to the hives and you'll see," said she, "and I hope it will be a lesson to you."

Young Bumble-bee flew on, joining Miss Wasp as he went, and they sat down on a hollyhock close by, where, by just leaning forward a little, both hives could be plainly seen. There lay his old friend, the drone, on his back, just expiring, and all about other drones, some dead and some dying, were scattered before the doors.

"What does it mean?" said Young Bumble-bee, turning quite pale. "Is it the cholera? I don't feel at all well. I must go home."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Wasp. "No cholera at all. It's the season for killing the drones, that's all. You don't seem to know anything about your own relations. Don't you know that they make a regular business of killing off the drones, because they won't work?"

"Because they won't work," repeated Bumble-bee, shaking. "I never heard of such a thing. Let's go somewhere else."

"Come with me," said Miss Wasp. "I know where there are some strawberries in sugar. I saw two jars put on a table to cool a little while ago. Better than honey."

Young Bumble-bee flew on with her, and sat down on the window-sill, while Miss Wasp lit on the edge of a jar which was still open. "Delicious!" she was saying, when into the room came a little girl; a very little girl, hardly three years old, who knew as much about the strawberries as Miss Wasp, and went straight to them. Bumble-bee was not hungry, — he was too frightened to be hungry, — so he sat still and watched the little girl, who wore a gingham apron to keep her dress clean, and had on stockings, striped blue and white.

"Such stockings!" said Bumble-bee, who had seen her before; "beautiful stockings! Why can't I be a little girl and wear stockings?"

Up to the table the little girl walked, and put her small pointed finger right into the jar, and after her came a woman, who pulled the finger out, faster than it had gone in.

"Can't trust you out o' my sight a minute," she said. "You'd a-made yourself sick eating preserves, next thing."

"Nice fly, eat lots," the little girl said, pointing to Miss Wasp, who still sat on the edge of the jar.

"Nice fly! Goodness me!" said the woman. "Next thing you'll be picking that up. It's a wasp, and stings awful," and she fluttered her

apron, and knocked Miss Wasp to the floor, where she at once stepped on her.

"Dear, dear!" said young Bumble-bee, flying away fast as he could. "It does seem as if everything were going to destruction," and he sat down in a red hollyhock, and wiped his face, which felt very hot. In the heart of the hollyhock a drop of dew still lay, and three of Young Bumble-bee's feet slipped in it as he sat down.

"There," he said peevishly, flirting off the water. "If I had had stockings on, that couldn't have happened," and he flew home to talk to his mother about it. She was not there, and he sat down on the chickweed and looked at a hairy caterpillar, which had rolled itself into a ball, when a black spider went by.

"Now she can't be wet by anything," said he, "and there are the beetles, too; might be rained on a year, and their backs would shed every drop, and here I am, with such delicate feet, that the least wetting gives me a cold, and mother's just the same. Sneezing half the time, because she will go out so early in the morning, that she's soaked with dew every day. Why don't we have stockings?"

"What are you sulking about now?" said Mrs. Ant, stopping a moment to rest, as she lugged along a fly's hind quarter.

"I'm not sulking," said Young Bumble-bee. "I'm thinking I'm wishing I had some stockings, and then I think I might go to work and make me a house without dying of hasty consumption while I was about it."

"Well, did I ever!" said Mrs. Ant. "What'll get into your head next? You'd better talk to your mother; I'm too busy," and she tugged on.

Young Bumble-bee *did* talk to his mother, till she grew tired of the sound of his voice; but not a word about stockings could she tell him, though all the day long she tried to think how some could be made. Young Bumble-bee thought too, and went about among his relations asking questions, till the Mason-bee cut him altogether; the Carpenter-bee slammed the door in his face; and the oldest Honey-bee said she was tired out with advising him, and if he was not content to be as he had been made, he might better go and live with the hornets or the wasps.

So day after day he wondered how he should manage, and grew so thin with thinking and scolding, that his poor mother was almost worn out worrying over him, and had to make a dozen new pansy-leaf pocket-handkerchiefs, because she had cried the old ones all to pieces. She brought honey from the sweetest clover tops in the country, but he hardly tasted it. He sat in the door,

with his head down, till every bug, and worm, and fly that came near, said, "He's got something on his mind;" and the burying-beetles whispered together that his time would soon come, and even went so far as to look out the best spot to put him in, in case he committed suicide.

Well, one morning, crawling out of the door, he found the sun shining so gloriously, that to save his life he couldn't help being a little cheered by it. So he flew along slowly and feebly till he reached the fence, and then sat down to rest. Here, between the rails, were two large spider-webs, one on each side the post, into the holes in which the spiders ran, if they wanted to be out of sight, or if it rained. In one web lived a black spider, who had two bags of eggs under her care, which she watched every moment when she was not catching flies, and in the other lived a great black and yellow one, like the one you caught the other day, and which you thought was a Tarantula, though you know now that it was not, but only second or third cousin to it.

Mrs. Tarantula, we will call her, was strong enough to tie up the biggest hornet, or even bumble-bee, that got into the web, and kept some of her eyes on Young Bumble-bee, as he sat there half asleep. Mrs. Black-spider would have eaten

him too, fast enough, I dare say, just as fast as Mrs. Tarantula, probably, but she dreaded to see anything bigger than a blue-bottle fly in her web, because before they were well tied, they were sure to tear it to pieces trying to get away. So she said, " Good morning," very politely, and then went on, rolling up half a fly in a bit of web, and tucking it away in the post-hole for future eating.

" I think I will clear out my pantry," she said. " I can't have such a stack of bags lying round," and she walked into a dark corner, and presently tumbled out two or three of the bits of web, in which flies had been. Bumble-bee looked on, half stupidly at first, and then such a thought came into his head, that he spread his wings and buzzed louder than he had for a month.

" What's the matter ? " said Mrs. Spider, stepping out. " For mercy's sake don't get into the web. You'll have it all to pieces ! "

Young Bumble-bee flew down to the grass where the bags lay, and now, slipping one leg in, found that though it wouldn't stay in when lifted, yet that here at last were the stockings he had pined for so long, soft as could be, and a delicate gray, which set off the shining black of his legs to great advantage.

"You don't want to use them, I know," he said, "so you will let me have them, Mrs. Spider, won't you?"

"Why yes," said Mrs. Spider, laughing so she nearly fell off the post, and saying to herself, "Did I ever hear of such a fool?"

"Then you must help me tie them on," said Young Bumble-bee, "for they won't stay a minute."

"Very well," said Mrs. Spider, thinking to herself what fun it would be to go after him if only she had wings, and hear what would be said about him. So she crawled down the post, and as fast as Bumble-bee got a leg safely into one of the bags, spun enough silk to tie it tight around his knee, till five legs were in five bags, and Bumble-bee said he wouldn't do any more that day, but come again to-morrow.

All Bug Land turned out as he flew up to the Carpenter-bee's house, for such a thing had never been seen. Even the mole heard the scurrying overhead, and put up one eye, and then drew it in again, knowing that, even if he looked all day, he could see nothing. Every ant on the way to pasture, stood still and stared. The squash-bugs stopped eating up the squash-vines; the rose-bugs flew after him fast as they could, and every miller and fly followed.

"This is very fine," said Young Bumble-bee. "If only it did not tire my legs so; but one must always suffer a little who rises above the common level of things," and he settled on the Hollyhock, half dead with fatigue.

"Don't come here," said the Hollyhock, giving a flirt, which tumbled him out. "I won't be trodden on by such legs."

"Get away from me!" shouted the Four-o'clock, shutting up fast as it could.

The ants laughed, and the Speckled Caterpillar, walking up a tomato-vine, said, "You'd better go home. I heard the Tiger-moth say such silly doings were not to go on in Bug Land. If you stay here there'll be a mob."

"Stuff!" said Young Bumble-bee. "It is a free country. I am a benefactor. I have found out, not only the only road to health, but the reason why spiders were made. As soon as I am rested, I am going to call on every bee I know, and ask them to form a society for encouraging the making of spider-web stockings. Before you are in a cocoon, Mrs. Caterpillar, you will see every Bumble-bee doing what I have done, and my memory will live forever."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Caterpillar, and Bumble-bee flew down to the meadow, and went home. His mother cried harder, when she saw

the stockings, than she ever had before, and Bumble-bee, who was dreadfully tired, tried to take them off before going to bed. They wouldn't come off though, for Mrs. Spider had fastened them on so tight, that they never could, unless his legs came off too. So he went to bed, but couldn't lie down comfortably, you know, and had cramps all night. He was too tired to fly about next day as he had intended, and the next night begged his mother to help him get out of them. No use. The Carpenter-bee called, when he heard of the trouble, and got off part of one; but he could not cut the cord which tied the stocking on, without cutting the leg too, and he did not dare to try. He came again next day, and got off part of another, and then Mrs. Bumble-bee went to Mrs. Spider, and begged her to come and help them.

"I can't," said Mrs. Spider. "I'm sorry for you; but I never undo any work once done."

Mrs. Bumble-bee went home crying, but that could not help Young Bumble-bee. He grew weaker and weaker, and at last, when the black cricket looked in, in the afternoon, to ask if she could do anything, poor Bumble-bee had stopped breathing, and the burying-beetles were already at the door.

Mrs. Bumble-bee was sorry, but nobody else

cared very much, because he had never done anything but have his own way. So he died, and even now the ants, who are still living next door, tell their children the story when the day's work is done. The black cricket sings a song about it, and Grandfather Longlegs has written it down, with all the other wonderful things he knows; and told me the other day, as he ran down my leg, that if he lived long enough to find the right sort of Editor, he should publish a big book, all about everything.

VI.

HAYING TIME.

"WHERE'S Ainslee?" said Grandma Walton, coming out from the bedroom with her hymn-book and a sprig of fennel in her hand. "The first bell's ringing, and I'm sure I heard his voice down in the garden. Why ain't he ready for church?"

"Do you think it a good plan for so small a boy to go, mother?" said Mr. Barton, Ainslee's father, who came up from the city every Saturday to stay over Sunday.

"Small boy!" said grandma. "Why, he's most five years old. His mother began to go when she wasn't three, and his Uncle Ainslee, too. You'll spoil that child with your notions; and how will he learn to respect the Sabbath if he ain't taught when he's young?"

"I doubt if taking him to church twice on Sunday will do that," said Mr. Barton. "We try to make the day a very pleasant one, so that he may have only happy ideas of it to look back upon. His mother always teaches him some little

hymn or sweet Bible verse, and he is very much interested in Bible stories, so that I'm inclined to think he will be glad to go of his own free-will when he is older."

"Well!" said grandma, shaking her head, "every one to his notion; yours ain't mine."

At this moment Ainslee, holding his mother's hand, came in, his blue eyes shining and his cheeks very red.

"Grandma," said he, "my sweet pea comed up on top of a stem, an' mother says that's the right way, an' I mustn't put it back again, for I was a-going to, and my bean did just like it. Where you going?"

"To church," said grandma, "where a boy like you ought to be going too, and not rampaging round the whole o' Sunday."

"Get him ready, mamma," said Mr. Barton, "and we'll take him this morning. Will you be very good, Ainslee?"

"Yes, *sir*," said Ainslee, as he trotted off with mamma, quite pleased with the prospect.

"I shall ride with grandma and Uncle Ainslee," said his mother, "and you and father will walk, because the buggy will not hold all of us, and the rockaway broke down yesterday, you know, when they took John and Lizzie to the dépôt. You must try and sit very still through the sermon,

even if you do get a little tired, and this afternoon I will tell you all about Noah and his dove."

All this time mamma was unbuttoning and buttoning ever so many buttons, while nurse held the baby, who crowed and squealed at Ainslee, and at last, getting near enough, caught at a curl and pulled till he was quite red in the face.

"What a baby!" said Ainslee; "he don't know enough to sit still in church — does he, mamma?"

"I guess not," said mother; and Ainslee, being all ready, started down-stairs, holding his little straw hat and looking very fresh and sweet. Grandma gave him a great kiss as they went into the sitting-room.

"Pretty is that pretty does," said she ; "you be a good boy now, Ainslee."

Mr. Barton stood on the piazza waiting for him; he was so tall and Ainslee so short and fat that there was difficulty in keeping up with him, and Ainslee, after holding on hard to his father's middle finger, and taking a good many little steps to one of his long ones, decided to let go and only hold on to his coat-tail if any danger came up. So they went on together over the beautiful country road. The day was hot, but rain had fallen the night before; so there was no dust, and the road was shaded by great elms and ma-

ples. By and by grandma and mamma passed them, driving slowly.

"Hurry along," said grandma.

"Plenty of time," answered Mr. Barton; "it's only ten now, and we shall be there in twenty minutes or so."

The little white church was on the other side of the river, which was crossed by a covered bridge. Ainslee put his feet down hard as they walked through it.

"It sounds like a drum," said he, as a wagon passed them. "I wish we were going to stay here and stamp instead of going to church. No, I don't, either, 'cause mamma said there was a little brook ran all along by the road after we got out of the bridge; let's hurry!

If Ainslee had been a little older, he would have stopped as they came out into daylight, and looked down the lovely winding river, and at the village under the shadow of the great mountain. The road gradually ascended as they left the bridge; groves of maples were on one side, — sugar-bushes, as the farmers called them, — and on the other a brook ran down and emptied into the river. It was a noisy brook there, rushing into the smooth water over stones and rocks as if in great hurry to get somewhere else as fast as possible; but it grew more quiet as they walked on,

bubbling over little white pebbles, and gleaming around wee fishes who swam busily about.

By and by, at the very foot of the hill on which the church stood, they came to a little foot-bridge which crossed it. There the brook widened again, and then turned off into some woods. Two great oaks stood over it; there was a line of stepping-stones, not so far apart but what even Ainslee's little legs could get from one to the other, and here were whole crowds of shiners.

"O papa," said Ainslee, "do please go on to the stones."

Papa was quite ready for it himself, and Ainslee stopped on the middle one and looked at the fish, and then up and down the brook.

"It's the beautifullest place that ever was," said he. "Why can't we live here all the time, papa?"

"We can live here every summer," said his father. "Perhaps I shall leave you here some winter with mamma and baby if I have to go away. Come now, or we really shall be late; don't you hear the bell tolling?"

Only a little further up the hill and there was the church. Mamma was standing with Uncle Ainslee on the church-steps, talking to a very old man. Ainslee saw some people in the pews, but ever so many seemed to be outside, waiting for the

bell to stop ringing. Papa spoke to the old man too, and then all went into the church together. Ainslee had never seen anything like it. The pews were all square, with such high backs — he couldn't see anything at all when he was sitting down, but the crowns of the bonnets in front. He was right opposite grandma, and kept wondering how long it would take her to bite every seed off her sprig of fennel.

Pretty soon the bell stopped.

Ainslee stood up on the seat and watched the people come in. Then the minister stood up, and when he had read a hymn, everybody turned round and looked up to the gallery where a large man played the bass-viol, and another man a flute, and all the choir sung a tune called Dundee. Ainslee knew it was Dundee, because grandpa had asked mamma to sing it the evening before, and papa and Uncle Ainslee had both joined in.

He listened to the chapter which the minister read, for it was about the ravens which fed Elijah, and he came very near singing, — "Where, oh where is the good Elijah?" — one verse of a hymn which he had heard in Sunday-school at home.

Then came the long prayer: Ainslee stood up by his father and stretched his small neck, trying to see the minister, who prayed in a very loud voice, and then they sung another hymn and the

sermon began. Ainslee expected to hear some more about Elijah, and listened very quietly for a time, but not a word could he understand.

"He's preaching to the big people," thought he; "I ain't going to look at him any more."

Grandma gave him a fennel seed and he ate it; then he stared up at the high pulpit and wondered if the minister wasn't afraid to stay in it, and why the white board over it was put there.

It was getting very hot and uncomfortable. The sun shone in right on his head, for their pew was by a window, though grandma and mamma sat by it, so that he could not climb up to look out. All at once, *bang* fell a book from the gallery. Ainslee stood up on the seat to see what it meant. There was Sinny in the gallery looking guilty, and Ainslee laughed aloud, he was so pleased to see him. Then he remembered where he was and sat down with such a red face that papa coughed and mamma put her handkerchief to her mouth.

Ainslee hardly stirred till church was out, and he held his mother's hand tight when he found himself again in the open air.

"What made you laugh?" said grandma.

"'Cause I sawed Sinny," said Ainslee.

"Why wasn't you listening to the minister?" said grandma severely.

"'Cause he wasn't sayin' anything I knew about," answered Ainslee. "He kept a hollerin' at God, and I got tired hearing him."

Grandma would have said something more, but mamma took his hand.

"Papa will drive grandma home," said she, "and we will walk, I think, with Uncle Ainslee."

All the way home they were talking of old times, and Ainslee found that his mother, when a little girl, had walked over stepping-stones in that very brook, on her way to the same church, and that once Uncle Ainslee had waded with her on his back, away down to a deep pool under a great pine-tree, and then sat on the bank to watch for a big trout that was said to live there. Ainslee was so interested that the walk seemed very short, and when they reached home he was astonished to find it after one o'clock. He ate some lunch, and then went up-stairs with mamma, who told him about Noah and his dove, and showed him a beautiful picture of the dove with the olive-leaf in his mouth, flying over the dark water.

"Do you s'pose Noah found the dove again when he went down the hill?" said Ainslee.

"I think very likely he did," said his mother; "the dove would remember him, and come where he was, perhaps. At any rate we know it found a tree to rest on, and I dare say it built a nest and had dear little doves in it."

"Are grandpa's doves any relation to Noah's?" asked Ainslee.

His mother laughed, and just then they were all called to dinner, and Ainslee went down very hungry.

Mamma's parlor-organ had been brought up from the city, and after dinner she played and sung sweet old hymns, with papa and Uncle Ainslee. They ended with "Shining Shore," and Ainslee sang it with them very loud. It was bed-time now, and when he kissed grandma he said, — "I didn't go to laugh, grandma, but I could n't help it when I sawed Sinny. I'll be real good next Sunday."

Grandma smiled a little when he had left the room. "I guess he'd better go to Mr. Parker's church, down to the village," said she; "they say he interests everybody, children and grown folks too."

Next morning when Ainslee was being dressed he heard a curious ringing sound from the meadows.

"What's that?" said he.

"It's mowers," answered nurse; "they're sharpening their scythes."

Ainslee ran to the window and looked out. There were three men in grandpa's meadow; two were mowing, and one stood resting his scythe

on the ground and rubbing a whetstone back and forth on the blade.

"My!" said Ainslee, "I want to go there."

"That would never do," said his mother, who had just come in; "a hay-field, while they are mowing, is a dangerous place for little boys; their legs might be almost cut off, if they went near those great sweeping knives. When the hay is cut and drying, I dare say grandpa will let you play in it as much as you please, and Tom will give you a ride home on the hay-wagon."

"That's good," said Ainslee; "only I wanted to cut some hay myself."

"Wait till you are larger," said his mother; "your little fat arms couldn't hold a scythe very long."

Sinny was by the back-door before Ainslee had finished his breakfast, and grandma coming out found him on the step.

"Don't you get into any more mischief with Ainslee," said she; "you play right round where some of us can see you all the time."

"Yes, ma'am," said Sinny, and then Ainslee came out.

"Let's go stand on the fence and see 'em mow," said he; and they started down to the meadow, and climbing to the top of the fence, each sat on a post and looked over.

"You can't mow — can you, Sinny?" said Ainslee.

"Never tried," said Sinny; "guess I'm too short — grandfather can. He's a-mowing the big field to-day. There's a sickle up in our barn. I shouldn't wonder if I could mow with that."

"What's a sickle?" said Ainslee.

"O you gump!" said Sinny. "It's like a scythe, only it's kinder round."

"Let's get it," said Ainslee, "and mow grandma's bleaching ground; the grass is dreadful high."

"Come along then," said Sinny; and they started up to his grandfather's barn.

"Did you ever hear any story about a squirrel, Sinny?" said Ainslee.

"No," said Sinny; "I shouldn't think there was any stories about 'em."

"But there are," said Ainslee; "Uncle Ainslee told us a beautiful one. I'll tell it to you."

So sitting down on a stone by the road and forgetting their errand entirely, Ainslee told all that he could remember of the squirrel story. Sinny was very serious when it ended, and seemed half a mind to cry. "Let's hunt for the tree," said he. "I'd like to find where they buried 'em."

"Well," said Ainslee, "when we've done the mowing, we will. Let's go for the sickle this minute."

Sinny scrambled upon a pile of boards to reach it and handed it down to Ainslee. "Grandfather sharpened it the other day," said he, "so you look out and not cut you."

"We ought both to mow at a time," said Ainslee; "there's three men mowing at grandpa's: ain't you got another sickle?"

"No," said Sinny, "not one; you can take a knife, 'cause you ain't used to mowing."

"I'll get grandma's carving-knife," said Ainslee; "that gets sharpened every day."

There was nobody in the dining-room when the children got down to Grandpa Walton's. Ainslee took the big knife from the knife-drawer, and ran round to the bleaching-ground behind the wood-house where Sinny was waiting for him, and where he had already cut quite a little pile of grass. Sinny was barefoot, and kicked the grass aside with his little black toes.

"The grass feels good — don't it?" said Ainslee. "I'm a-going to take off my shoes, so's to kick it too."

So Ainslee pulled off his shoes after much trouble; but concluded to leave on his stockings, as his mother had told him he must not go bare-

foot, and then he began to work with his knife, which made small headway compared with the sharp sickle. "Let me have the sickle, Sinny," said he.

"I don't want to," said Sinny; "I want to get a lot."

"I think you might," said Ainslee, after trying again.

"Well, I will a minute," said Sinny; "give it right back though."

Ainslee succeeded so well that he was not at all willing to give it up when Sinny claimed it. "I'm a-going to keep it," said he: "you take the knife."

"But I ain't a-going to," said Sinny; "you give me my sickle."

"'Tisn't yours — it's your grandfather's," said Ainslee, "an' you haven't any business to have it." Sinny reflected. "He ain't your grandfather, any way," said he; "and I will have it — so now."

There was a moment's struggle; then mamma looking from her chamber-window heard a scream, and Sinny came running up to the house and began to cry. Mamma ran out to Ainslee.

In the dispute the sickle had fallen and he had stepped on it heavily. His stocking was cut through, and the blood streaming from his foot.

Mamma lifted and carried him to the porch. There was a deep cut in the foot, and Uncle Ainslee, coming up, found mamma very pale.

"I want a doctor right away," said she. "I'm afraid Ainslee's foot is dreadfully hurt."

Uncle Ainslee looked carefully at it. "No," said he, "there's no serious harm done; the cut must be sewed, though, I think, for it's quite deep, and he will have to be perfectly quiet. He's faint; let me take him up-stairs."

Uncle Ainslee bound his handkerchief tightly about the foot, and then, after carrying Ainslee up to his own bed, went quickly for the doctor.

It seemed a long time before he came — to mamma, who sat waiting; and Ainslee felt sick and faint, and hardly opened his eyes. By and by a carriage stopped, and Uncle Ainslee and the doctor got out together and ran up the stairs. It hurt Ainslee when the handkerchief was unrolled, but Doctor Marsh was very gentle. He looked very carefully to see if any little stone or bit of dirt had worked into the cut, — for *that*, he said, would make it very sore, — and then, after the foot was washed, he bound it up with nobody could tell how many little strips of plaster. Ainslee felt quite comfortable now, and turned very red when the doctor said, —

"How did this happen, Mrs. Barton?"

"I don't know at all," said mamma. "I'm afraid Sinny did it in some way. Ainslee mustn't play with him any more."

"O mamma!" said Ainslee; "it wasn't Sinny at all. I wouldn't let him have his own sickle, an' I dropped it and then I stepped on it."

"What were you doing with sickles?" said Mrs. Barton.

"There wasn't but one, mamma," said Ainslee; "I had grandma's carving-knife, and we was mowing the bleaching-ground."

"Well," said Doctor Marsh, laughing, "I shall have something new to tell my patients to-day. He must keep perfectly still, Mrs. Barton, for a week at least; by that time he can walk again."

Doctor Marsh, going out, found Sinny crying miserably on the door-step.

"He ain't dead — is he?" said he.

"Oh no," said Doctor Marsh, "but he might have been. You must never play in such a way again."

Sinny caught up the sickle and ran up the road. Half an hour later his mother came down and asked for Mrs. Barton.

"What ever I'm to do with that Sinny I don't know," said she. "I've shut him up and told

him he wasn't to have no dinner nor supper. It's a mercy both of 'em wasn't killed."

"It certainly is," said Mrs. Barton; "but Sinny is only to blame for having the sickle in the first place, and I hope it will be a lesson to them both."

Through all that hot week in July, Ainslee lay still on the bed or sofa. After the first day he begged so for Sinny that at last mamma sent for him, though grandma said "It beat all natur' to think she should."

Uncle Ainslee taught them how to play dominoes and jack-straws, but the third day Ainslee wearied of them and every other play, and begged for stories. He had had a little piece of chicken for his dinner, and it had been the wish-bone piece. Nurse had dried it for him at the kitchen fire, and now it lay on the bed by him.

"I think I'll tell you a story about a wish-bone," said Uncle Ainslee. Ainslee's eyes brightened, and Sinny smacked his lips as if something good were coming. Look on the next page and you will find out whether or no they were disappointed.

VII.

BETTY'S WISH-BONE.

Betty swung her sun-bonnet back and forth as she stood in the door of the queer little house, that had been pelted by so many storms nobody could tell whether it had ever been painted or not. It was a low house, with a roof slanting crazily down at the back almost to the ground, and all green with moss. Betty had climbed up to the ridge-pole when quite a little girl, and then tumbled over and over very fast indeed, rolling right down into a feather-bed which her mother had put out to air, without being hurt one bit, save some scratches on her fat arms and neck. She did not think of climbing up there now, for she was almost nine years old, and knew a great deal better than to do such things. In fact, she hardly had time to climb, for she was a handy little body, and Mrs. Brown could hardly have done without her.

Betty's mother had lived alone in this tumble-down house ever since Betty was a year old. In the summer, when city people came up to the

"She could attend to nothing else on the way down, for the road was rough." —See page 83.

pretty village under the great mountain, she washed and ironed all the day long, and when the beautiful white clothes were folded and laid in the long basket, Betty drew them to the village on a queer little wagon, which was nothing but a piece of board with four wooden wheels and a rope for a handle. She could attend to nothing else on the way down, for the road was rough, and a careless movement would have tipped the basket over at once; but coming home there was no such responsibility, and she could run by the brook and watch the little fish skimming along, or pick flowers, or look for wintergreen berries.

When the summer ended, and there were no more washing and ironing, Mrs. Brown did coarse sewing, and Betty spent many hours on a little stool at her mother's side, sewing over-hand seams or hemming towels. Work as they would, cold and hunger sometimes pinched them. There was no father to come home at night with the day's wages in his pocket, and often Betty's mother sat till late into the night, sewing on some garment, the price of which was to give them food and fuel for the next day. It was a hard life, and sometimes, when Mrs. Brown looked at little Betty fast asleep on the back-side of the bed, and thought of her growing up and

working steadily just for life, without any of the bright, pleasant times that come to other children, tears fell very fast on her sewing, and she had to pray very earnestly for faith and patience.

Often now she talked to Betty of her desire to give up washing and buy a sewing-machine, and told her how she could then do more work in an hour or two than she accomplished now in a whole day. Betty listened and wished, but where was the money to come from? It seemed useless to think of such a thing for one moment, and so the hard work went on.

This day Betty was to carry home the last washing for the year, and the long basket would be trundled back and put away in the garret till another season began. So she stood in the door, swinging her sun-bonnet, and looking out to the November sky which seemed very cold and gray. Tightly as those strings were sewed on, they certainly would have come off, if Betty's mother, balancing the basket on the shaky wagon, had not seized it, tied it under the round chin, and started her little girl off with a hug and a kiss.

Betty pulled her load along slowly through the wood, wondering, as she went, if mother meant to buy anything for a Thanksgiving dinner. To-morrow was the day; she knew they would go to church in the morning, and in the

afternoon she thought she should take her rag-doll, Amelia Jane, for a long walk. Perhaps mother would make a turn-over, and then she could have a tea-party in the evening.

Thinking all these thoughts, she soon reached the village, and stopped before the house where the boarders had been all summer. Mrs. Thompson was in the kitchen, and Betty, looking in as the fat Irish girl lifted the basket, smelled such a delicious smell, and saw so many nice things, that it was almost as good as having them.

"Come in, Betty and get good and warm," said Mrs. Thompson, and fat Biddy jerked her up to the fire, and planted her on a stool. "Shure thin, it's in goose-flesh the child's arums is," said she, "an' howiver she pulls along such a load a mile an' more, I can't see."

Betty *was* cold and tired, and there was a very wistful look in her eyes as she glanced at and then turned from, the long table, where pies and cakes and roast chickens were spread out in such array as she had never seen before.

Mrs. Thompson looked at her. "How hard she always has had to work!" she thought; "and yet how little money her poor mother earns, after all. She never frets, either. I wonder if they've got anything for Thanksgiving. They deserve a good dinner if anybody does."

Mrs. Thompson was very busy in her pantry for some minutes; and when the clothes were taken out, and the basket ready to go home, Betty saw there were some odd bundles in one end, and that Biddy had tied it down firmly to the wagon.

"There's something in the basket for your mother, Betty," said Mrs. Thompson; "don't touch it till you get home."

Betty said "No, ma'am," and trotted off briskly. How her fingers itched to lift those papers and the towel and see what lay underneath! That was really a very trying mile, but finally the last step was taken, and she dropped the rope handle at the door, and flew to her mother in the kitchen.

"O mother, mother! come just as quick as you can!" she shouted; "I can't wait another minute;" and she pulled her astonished mother to the open door.

Betty thought that string never would be untied, and when the basket was really carried in and set on the kitchen-table, she was quite breathless with excitement.

What a sight it was when all the coverings were taken off! There was a roast chicken, a pumpkin-pie, and a mince-pie, some bright red apples, and a little bag of nuts. Betty's eyes

were very round as she saw these goodies come out, one after another, but Mrs. Brown's quite filled with tears, she was so pleased. "To think we should have a Thanksgiving dinner after all, and I saying to myself that nine years old as you was, Betty, you'd never had one yet. It's 'most too good to be true."

Betty dreamed of roast chicken all night, and even in church next day meditated a little during the long sermon as to how it was likely to taste.

When they had reached home and brightened up the fire, Betty drew the little round table into the middle of the room, while her mother searched for a fine white table-cloth, too precious for every-day use, and Betty pulled at each corner to get it just even, and patted down every wrinkle. The plates were old and cracked, and the two-tined forks joggled in their handles, as also did the knives, and Betty's drinking-cup was only a very battered tin one; but when the chicken was set on, and then the dish of white, mealy potatoes, and the pie, and the red apples, Betty's cheeks glowed, and her eyes were like two stars, as she thought what a splendid time they were going to have.

Miss Amelia Jane, whose weak back wouldn't allow her to sit up, was laid on a three-legged stool, and had little bits of everything offered

to her. Betty pretended she ate them, but as pussy sat under the table and kept very still, I'm inclined to think she knew where they went to, and that Miss Amelia Jane had very little to do with it.

Betty was very hungry, and after she had eaten both drumsticks her mother put a nice little piece of white meat on her plate.

"What a funny little bone!" said Betty, as she made way with the meat. "It's got a little head, and two legs way apart. What's its name, mother?"

"It's the wish-bone, Betty," answered her mother. "When I was a little girl at home, I used to dry 'em, and break 'em with sister Sally. The one that got the longest end had her wish, and we always counted on gettin' all the wish-bones we could."

"Why — but, mother," said Betty, "if I wish when I break it, can I *really* get what I want?"

"Try it and see," laughed her mother. "I don't say you will, and I don't say you won't."

Betty's face had quite a grave look, as, after finishing her pie, she hung the wish-bone on a hook inside the fire-place. She put Miss Amelia Jane to bed very quietly after the dishes were washed, and stared into the fire intently as she munched her red apple.

"There's chicken for to-morrow, Betty," said her mother, "and pie too, and enough apples for a week."

No answer. "What *are* you thinking of, child?"

"O mother!" said Betty, "I'm going right to bed. There's so many things I want to wish for, it makes me dizzy to keep thinking;" and Betty pulled off her clothes, said "Now I lay me," and jumped into bed.

Next morning after breakfast, she rubbed her wish-bone smooth, tied it up in a piece of paper, and put it in her pocket. There it stayed, — for, think as she would, Betty never could settle down finally on any one thing. Yet she took a good deal of comfort in knowing she *could* wish if she chose, and often told Amelia Jane in confidence of the fine things she should have if she only once decided to break the charmed bone.

So the winter passed away; spring came and merged into summer, and still the wish-bone was daily looked at, and daily returned to the pocket. Betty had almost made up her mind, and as she tugged the basket of clothes back and forth, thought with more and more enthusiasm of a doll.

Amelia Jane was really worn out, and now it must be a great doll, with real clothes and shoes

and stockings; — perhaps even a hat and parasol, like Lucy Smith's! Betty ran and danced as she dreamed of it, but still she didn't break the wish-bone.

The last of July came. Mrs. Brown was not well, and for a week Betty had had but little washing to take home. On Saturday, as she started with her last basket of clothes, her mother said, — "Take your time coming home, Betty. Here's a ginger-cake you may put in your pocket, and take your tin cup along, and maybe you can find some berries."

Betty's eyes sparkled. She had had no holiday for a long time. The day was hot and dusty, but she hurried on, delivered her burden, and almost ran till she reached the cool, green wood again. Then she sat down by the brook, under a great tree whose spreading roots were carpeted with soft green turf. A cool little breeze blew down through the branches, and the brook bubbled along over the stones in a quiet, dreamy sort of way, and Betty heard a bird hopping overhead, and saw a red squirrel run down a tree and back again.

"Raspberries!" said Betty; "I know she's got a raspberry." Off she ran to an open space in the wood; sure enough, there were raspberries in plenty, and her cup was soon filled.

"Now I'll have a tea-party," said Betty; "I wish Amelia Jane was here."

She picked a broad, green leaf, put some of her berries in it, and mashed the rest in her tin cup. "Raspberry wine," said Betty, as she filled it up with water from the brook.

Then she broke up her ginger-cake into a great many pieces, put each one into an acorn cup, and leaning back against the tree, ate and drank slowly.

"How nice it is!" thought Betty. "It's warm, and it's cool, too, and things taste good. I wish mother had some berries. I'll take her some in my cup when I go home; poor mother! she works all the time, and I can't do much of anything but take the clothes home" — and here Betty's mind wandered off into all sorts of plans for helping.

"The wish-bone!" she thought, with a start. "I might better wish for mother than myself. Which shall it be — machine or doll?"

Betty was half-angry that such a question should come up, and she took her bone from her pocket with a little impatient jerk and laid it down on the leaf near her berries.

There was a stir in the bushes near her. She turned quickly. What a pale, dirty, miserable little face was looking at her. Betty knew in a

moment that it was little Ben Jones, whose mother had been sick in the poor-house a long time.

"Why, Ben!" said she, "what made you come here?"

"Mother's dead," said Ben; "and I ran away yesterday from the poor-house, and stayed in a barn all night, and I'm hungry, and — oh-h!"

Poor Ben broke down, and cried and cried. Betty looked at him, and then cried too.

"Ben, you may have the rest of my ginger-cake," she said, when his sobs grew fainter; and I'll show you where the berries are, and you can wash your face in the brook, and I'll take you home with me, and mother 'll let you stay to-night, I guess."

So Ben, quite comforted, scrubbed his dirty little fists and then his face in the brook, and wiped them on Betty's apron, and then the two children gathered berries, and Ben ate the rest of the ginger-cake.

The sun was setting when Betty remembered she must go home. She was half-afraid, as she neared the house, of what might be said to poor Ben, and sent him behind the house till she could tell his story.

Mrs. Brown had been thinking all that afternoon what would become of Betty if she were

left alone, and her heart was tender toward all motherless children; so she said, "He can stay till Monday, Betty, and then something must be done for him."

Betty dragged Ben in from behind the wood-pile, where he had taken refuge, and as he looked at Mrs. Brown's kind motherly face, he cried again.

Supper comforted him, and a presentation to Amelia Jane followed.

"I've got something else, Ben," said Betty, putting her hand in her pocket.

"O mother, mother! Oh my wish-bone!" she cried a moment after. "I left it in the wood! O mother, what shall I do?"

Unhappy Betty! it was dark, and nothing could be found that night at any rate. Ben promised to look for it by daylight next morning, but Betty crept sadly to bed. "If I'd only wished," she said, "but now it's gone, and none of us won't have anything at all."

Next morning it rained. How it rained! Ben came back dripping from a long hunt for it, and had to be wrapped in a quilt while his clothes dried.

Betty could not help laughing at the queer figure he cut, but it was a very sad Sunday. Monday dawned bright and clear, and Betty

would have dashed off to the wood at once, but her mother, who had looked very pale and strange ever since she got up, sat down suddenly in a chair near her.

"I've got to go to bed again, Betty," said she, "but don't you be frightened; make me some catnip tea after you've had your breakfast, and let Ben run to the village and tell Mrs. James I can't take her washing to-day."

When Betty returned, her mother sat up in bed, stitching on a fine bosom she had begun a day or two before. "It's no use, Betty," she groaned. "I thought I could finish it but I can't; there's only one plait done. Take it to Mrs. Hopkins, and ask her to do it on her machine."

Betty took the bosom, and watched the tiny plaits come one after another from under the flashing needle, quicker almost than her eyes could follow them, and when an hour or two later, she brought it back to her mother beautifully stitched, words hardly came fast enough to tell her wonder and delight at the rapid work. "If you'd sat up all night, mother, you couldn't have made it look like that," said Betty.

"I know it," sighed her mother. "'Twould be easy work earning a living with one of them; but now I can't either wash or sew, and what we're to do the Lord only knows."

Many days passed, and poor Mrs. Brown still lay there, quite worn-out with hard work. Perhaps the poor-house people were glad to get rid of Ben. At any rate, there he stayed, and Betty and he took turns in house-keeping. He chopped up their firewood, brought water from the brook, and ran errands till Mrs. Brown often wondered what they should have done without him. Their money ran very low before she had strength to sit up again. Kind people in the village helped them in many ways, but the prospect before them was very dark.

"Oh! if I'd only wished!" Betty thought many a time as she heard her mother sigh — "if I'd only wished for the machine right away, mother wouldn't have been sick; and oh! when shall I get to look for my wish-bone?"

One afternoon Mrs. Brown, looking at Betty's pale cheeks, thought a run in the wood might do her good. "I can spare you to-day, Betty," she said, "so run off and have a rest, my good child."

A little hope came to poor Betty, and as she kissed her mother she thought, "Maybe I'll find the wish-bone, and wish after all."

She went slowly along toward the brook and the great tree. Three weeks and more had passed since her loss, and she felt it was almost

useless to search. Still she lifted up every leaf, looked under every stone, and in each crevice about the roots of the big tree. She did not see that a tall gentleman on the other side of the brook was watching her curiously; and so when she burst into a great passion of sobs, and threw herself on the ground, she was startled to hear a voice saying, "My little girl, what is the matter?" Betty looked up. It was a kind face before her, and her trouble was too great for bashfulness. "O sir!" she cried, "I lost my wish-bone before I'd wished, and mother 's sick, and we can't ever have anything!" and Betty cried again bitterly.

Little by little the stranger drew the whole story from her.

"I wouldn't give up yet," he said; "let 's look for it together.

Betty felt encouraged in spite of herself. "I've looked everywhere," she said; but even as she spoke the stranger turning up a dead branch disclosed the wish-bone!

"Oh!" screamed Betty, "I've got it, and now we can have everything!" and she cried again for very joy.

"Will you break it with me, Betty?" said the stranger.

Betty looked dubiously at him. Why not,

though? He had found it for her, and who had a better right? She held out one end, but what a sharp little conflict began all at once as she held it. She had thought that if only the bone were once found, she should not hesitate one moment in her wish, yet never had the doll seemed so lovely or so much to be desired. Self-indulgence and self-sacrifice battled fiercely in Betty's mind, and the stranger watching her, saw curious expressions flit over her little face.

"I'm awful to think of my doll one minute when mother has been so sick," thought Betty.

She shut her eyes tight, she was so in earnest, and pulled at her end as she said to herself, — "I wish mother might get well right away, and have a sewing-machine, so 't she needn't ever have to wash any more."

Betty didn't know in what a loud whisper she said these words, for she heard a little crack, and opening her eyes saw the long end in her hand! "Oh goody!" shouted Betty, and then sat quite still.

"Tell me what you wished — won't you?" said the stranger.

"I couldn't," Betty answered, "for you know it wouldn't come true if I did."

There was a queer little smile in his eyes as he said, "Then don't tell it by any means;" but

Betty was too busy in thought to notice it, and darted home as soon as she could get away. Ben met her half-way, and said they were to go to the village together for some medicine, and so an hour and more passed before she reached home again.

Betty gave a great jump as she went in, for the stranger sat there quite at home, and laughed aloud as she stood perfectly still in astonishment.

How mysterious it all was! Betty had to be told a great many times before she could really understand, that this tall gentleman was own brother to Ben's mother; that he had been in China for many years, and that coming home with more money than he could ever want for himself, he had found that there were no relatives left to help him in spending it save this one little Ben. "Uncle Dan," he said the children must call him; but Betty thought she never could give him that name.

After all, though, this afternoon had made them very well acquainted, and before bed-time Betty felt as if she had known him all her life, confided to him all her hopes and desires for her mother, and even whispered a description of Lucy Smith's doll.

It was astonishing how fast her mother got

well, now that she did not worry so much about their future, for Uncle Dan said those who had cared so kindly for his nephew must never want again. When one day he told them he must go to New York on business, Ben and Betty were almost heart-broken, and only consoled when he promised to come back in a week or two.

Two or three days afterwards, a wagon lumbered over the wood road and stopped at the little house. Out of it came a great wooden box, at which the driver and Ben hammered away for some time. When it came apart, there proved to be a small box inside, and on it was printed in great letters, —

"FOR BETTY BROWN."

Betty saw something else; what it was she didn't know, but she *felt*.

"Mother, O mother! it's the sewing-machine; I know it is; I know it is! I knew my wish was coming true!"

Betty was right. There it certainly was, in its pretty walnut case, the fairy that was to bring ease and comfort and freedom forever from hard, ill-paid labor. Mrs. Brown's eyes were full, and her hands shook as she lifted the lid and looked at the shining silver plate, and bright busy needle, and Betty danced wildly around, pulling Ben with her.

Meanwhile the driver had been knocking the cover off Betty's box. In it lay a paper one tied carefully. Betty's fingers were almost as unsteady as her mother's when she untied the knots and lifted the cover. There was one delighted little squeal, and then she stood quite still before a doll — such a doll! Lucy Smith's was nothing to it — lovely blue eyes, and curling hair, and red cheeks, and dressed just like a little girl five or six years old — button-holes and all — so that she could be undressed every night, and, besides the clothes, all sorts of pieces of silk and muslin and linen, so that Betty could make for herself dresses and aprons and all the little things. And in the bottom of the box there turned up such a beautiful book, with bright-red covers, and "Robinson Crusoe" on the back, and Ben's name in it! They were all quite wild, and Betty told her mother she thought they ought to be very thankful to God for making wish-bones.

Uncle Dan came back again, and enjoyed their happiness fully as much as they did. He stayed at home long enough to see Mrs. Brown overrun with orders for sewing-machine work, and to place both Ben and Betty at school. Ben himself was to decide on his future as he grew older.

Betty lost a little of her faith in wish-bones as years went on, but to this day she keeps the pieces of her first one in a little box, and was heard to say lately, as she looked at a fine carriage with its coat of arms, that if ever she were rich enough to ride in one, she was sure she should have a wish-bone painted on each door.

VIII.

AUGUST DAYS.

HAYING-TIME was over when Ainslee ran about again. Sinny was perfect in playing Jack-straws, for his little, lean, black fingers never joggled as Ainslee's fat, stumpy ones did; but Ainslee said he never wanted to play them any more, because he should always think he had a cut foot if he did. So they were put away in the closet with the dominos, and the Tivoli Board, and the Mansion of Happiness, which they hadn't succeeded in very well, because neither of them could read the names under the pictures; and now Ainslee spent all his time in the barnyard by the hen-house, where with the greatest pains he and Sinny had made for themselves a house from a pile of old boards, by tilting them up against the hen-house, and resting the ends on an old bench.

From this they sallied out to the woods or garden, bringing all spoils back to it. Here in a box with a glass top was Ainslee's great brown caterpillar, supplied each day with fresh green

leaves, and always expected to turn into a butterfly at any moment. Here, too, stood a big box, which Uncle Ainslee had cemented for them, and so made water-tight, and in it were two tadpoles, a small green frog who had been tadpole number one, and a turtle just the size of an old copper cent, that ate all the flies Ainslee and Sinny gave themselves time to catch, and could have eaten a great many more. Under a flower-pot in a corner lived two black crickets, who never chirped till after dark, and must have wondered all the time where the light had gone, for never a bit did they see, except when Ainslee lifted the pot a moment, to find out whether or not they had run away. Two black beetles had lived under it at first, but they had dug out immediately; and now Ainslee, who had heard Uncle Ainslee tell about the Chinese putting crickets in a dish and letting them fight, was keeping these for some rainy day, when he intended to try the experiment.

"They sing so loud every night," said he, "I don't believe they want to fight. I guess *Amelican* crickets is better than Chinese ones."

To-day, tadpole number two showed two little legs and was swimming about briskly, while the turtle sat on a stone that Ainslee had put into the box to play it was a rock, and looked as if

he hadn't had flies enough and felt that he had never been properly treated. Ainslee's father was very fond of Natural History, which is something that you little people, particularly those of you who live in the country, might know much more about than you do, just by keeping your eyes wide open, and watching the habits of every bird and insect you see, and Ainslee was getting old enough to spend much of his time in finding out the ways of spiders, and bugs, and worms.

Both big and little people too often think of these creatures as disgusting things, which they must crush and kill as fast as possible; but Ainslee, who had never been taught to be afraid of them, came walking in with speckled spiders, and long red and green worms, and kicking, sprawling bugs, till grandma said it was a mercy that his life was spared, and he was his father all over again. Sinny was interested, too, and his little woolly head was taking in knowledge which the district school would never give him, and which he, some day or other far in the future, might in turn give to his children.

This morning, however, he was more interested in his pocket, for there was something in it which jingled, and though he said not a word he kept his hand there till Ainslee couldn't bear it one moment longer.

"What *is* you got in your pocket, Sinny?" said he.

"Two cents," said Sinny. "Granther give 'em to me 'cause I picked the big wheelbarrow full of chips twice. I'm goin' to spend 'em to-day."

"I've got a three-cent *cullency*," said Ainslee, "that papa gived me. Let's go down to the village and spend them both to time."

"Your mother won't let you," said Sinny.

"Yes, she will," answered Ainslee. "You stay here and I'll go ask her."

Ainslee was gone some time, and came back with a clean face and hands, and a hat with a whole brim.

"Mamma says we must walk slow," said he, "'cause it's hot; and she says she trusts us not to get into mischief, and hopes we shall both be good."

"Well," said Sinny, "let's come right along, then," and the two children started down the road. The village was nearly a mile away, but the same road which passed grandpa's house, and led over the river to church, also led to the village, and there were beautiful maples all along the way, and a cold little spring which bubbled up under a rock, and tasted better than ice-water. Ponto was with them, and which of the

three went most out of their way it would be hard to tell. Ponto examined every bush and thicket, as if he were sure of a woodchuck at least; and wherever he went Ainslee and Sinny trotted after, to see what he was doing, till, if they had been anything but boys, they would have dropped down with weariness.

By the side of a farm-house was a pond, and here were sailing some goslings, while an old gray gander and two or three white geese stood on the edge overseeing them.

"Oh! the dear little gooses!" said Ainslee; "let's catch one, Sinny."

"The gander 'll run after you if you do," said Sinny.

"He wouldn't do such a thing," answered Ainslee. "He'd be afraid."

Ponto settled that question by jumping in suddenly among the geese. The old gander stood its ground, giving Ponto a nip with its bill that sent him off howling; then, seeming to think Ainslee had something to do with it, turned and ran toward him, hissing.

"He'll hit you a clip — run!" shouted Sinny; and they did run, never stopping till they found themselves on the grocery steps.

"My! ain't I hot?" said Sinny; "let's sit still a minute."

"'He'll hit you a clip, — run!' shouted Sinny." — See page 106.

Over the way was a druggist's, and looking in, Ainslee saw a soda-fountain and some bright bottles of sirups on the stand, while the druggist stood behind in his shirt sleeves.

"Ho!" said he, "there's soda-water. Papa buyed me some soda-water once. Let's get some instead o' candy."

"What's it like?" said Sinny.

"It's sweet, and bity, and cold, too," said Ainslee; "come over and we'll get some."

They crossed the street, and the druggist came forward.

"I want two glasses of sweet soda-water," said Ainslee.

"Sarsaparilla or lemon?" said the druggist. Ainslee thought lemon sounded best, and so said that, and two foaming glasses were given them. Sinny coughed and spluttered, but at last drank his down from a sense of duty; while Ainslee, who had finished his, stood watching him. Then he took out his three-cent bill, and Sinny his two pennies, and handed them over.

"This won't do," said the druggist. "I want fifteen cents more."

"But we haven't got but those," said Ainslee.

"Then you're a bad boy to come in and get soda-water in that way," said the druggist. "It's the same as stealing. You've got to pay for it,

right away, too, or maybe I'll send you up to the jail."

Ainslee and Sinny began to cry. "I didn't know it was fifteen cents more," said Ainslee. "I never did have so many."

"Go home and tell your mother what you've done, and come back quick with the money, or I'll be after you," said the druggist.

Ainslee and Sinny left the store heavy-hearted. Ponto ran and jumped before them, but they walked slowly on, not even looking when they came to the little pond, where now the geese and goslings were swimming together.

"Mamma said we mustn't get into mischief," said Ainslee. "I did n't know I was a-going to," and he cried again, till as they went in at grandpa's gate, and the thought of what he had to tell came over him more fully, the sobs merged into a roar.

"What is the matter?" said mother, running down the stairs. "Are you hurt, Ainslee?"

"No, mamma," sobbed Ainslee, "only I did get into mischief."

"What have you done now?" said mamma, anxiously.

"I buyed soda-water for Sinny and me, and the man said it was fifteen cents more, when I gived him my three cents and Sinny's two; and

he said maybe he'd send us to jail"—and here both Sinny and Ainslee screamed in concert.

"Mercy on me!" said grandma, coming out of the dining-room. "Ainslee ain't hurt again — is he?"

"No," said mamma, "he has only been experimenting in the village; he and Sinny have been buying soda-water on credit, and the druggist doesn't like it."

"I shouldn't think he would," said grandma. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Neither of them knew the price of a glass," said mamma, "though Ainslee should have asked me before he went; and as they didn't mean to do wrong I shall pay the druggist myself when I go to the village, and Ainslee will know better another time."

Ainslee's face had gradually cleared, and as mamma ended, he said, —

"Then we won't have to go to jail, mamma?"

"No indeed," said mamma. "Now run and have your face washed, and then you shall have some lunch."

Sinny received a cooky from grandma and ran home, while Ainslee, after getting up-stairs, felt so tired and sleepy that he lay down on the bed and went fast asleep till nearly tea-time. Even after supper he was still tired, and went to bed

very early, while mamma and Uncle Ainslee walked to the village and paid the druggist, who said if he had known who Ainslee was he should have told him it was all right; but of course it would never do to let any boy who wished get soda-water on credit.

Ainslee waked up next morning as fresh as ever. At the breakfast-table Uncle Ainslee, who had been reading Du Chaillu's "Travels in Africa," was talking to grandpa about gorillas, and describing some he had seen in New York, which Du Chaillu had brought there.

"What are gorillas?" asked Ainslee, who had listened with the greatest attention to an account of Du Chaillu's first meeting with one.

"They are a good deal like the ourang-outang which you saw last winter at the menagerie, only very much larger and stronger," said his father, who had come up from the city in the night, and astonished him by being at the breakfast-table when he came in. "I have the book in my valise, and after breakfast I will show you the pictures."

After breakfast, however, somebody came, and Ainslee, getting tired of waiting, went out to his house. Sinny was there, holding a little tin pail and looking very important.

"What have you got, Sinny?" asked Ainslee.

"Got a shiner," said Sinny; "'live too. I

caught him in our brook, and he just swimmed right into the pail — when I put it into the water."

"Put him into my *Aqualium*," said Ainslee, delighted, "and let's see what the tadpoles 'll do."

Sinny tipped the pail, and the little silvery thing slid in and then swam wildly about, as if not feeling at all at home in this dark box. The tadpoles paid no attention to it; the frog was fast asleep under a stone, and only the turtle came paddling along and put up his head to find out what was going on.

"He wants his breakfast," said Ainslee, and he threw in some cracker-crumbs and a fly or two that he had brought out.

Just then he saw his father walking down toward the old summer-house in the garden, carrying a book.

"Come along, Sinny," said Ainslee, "papa's going to tell me about pictures;" and both ran to where Mr. Barton had seated himself. It would take too long to tell you the many strange things which Mr. Barton told them about gorillas, — how some were so strong that they could take a gun, and break it in two as easily as you would a pipe-stem, and one blow from their great hands would kill you in a moment; how afraid of them all the different tribes of negroes were, and how few of them had dared to go with Mr. Du

Chaillu when he hunted them. They were not half through the book when mamma came out and said she was going to the village with papa, and Ainslee could go too if he wished.

"Come and see my beautiful shiner first," said Ainslee, and all went together.

"He'll be lonesome — won't he?" said Mr. Barton. "If you had two or three they would be company for each other."

"Mayn't I go to the brook with Sinny and get some? I'd rather than go to the village," said Ainslee.

"I'm afraid he'll tumble in," said mamma.

"No, I won't, mamma," said Ainslee. "I'll be real good."

"Well," said mamma, "take your lunch with you, and you can eat it in the meadow;" and Ainslee ran off delighted.

"I'm going a-fishing, grandma," said he, as he went into the house.

"What you going to fish with?" said grandma. "You'll get the fish-hooks in your hands and be hurt dreadfully."

"I ain't going to fish with a hook; I'm going to fish with a tin pail," said Ainslee. "Let me have a *teenty* one, grandma, and please put my lunch in it, 'cause I'm going to eat it under a tree along with Sinny."

Grandma filled the little pail with cookies, and looked as if she had more than half a mind to say that he ought not to go any way, though she said not a word more, and Ainslee danced off, down the hill on which the house stood, and through the beautiful meadow to the brook which wound through grandpa's land. It was August now, and the great heat had dried it up, till what was in spring-time almost a river, was now a narrow stream hardly up to Ainslee's knee at its deepest part, and with a belt of white stones on either side, that a month or two later would be covered again and kept away from the sun, when the stream began to rise under the fall rains.

Three great buttonwood-trees stood together by the brook-side, making a cool and pleasant shade. Here Ainslee sat down, and unlaced and took off his high boots and put his stockings in them, for the day was so warm that he felt sure mamma would let him wade, as he had done the week before, while Sinny stepped into the water and splashed all about.

"You stop a-doing that," said Ainslee, "you'll frighten all the shiners;" and he stepped in softly and sat down on a big stone in the middle of the brook.

"Oh here's all the cookies in the pail," said he; "let's eat 'em now."

"No," said Sinny, "let's put 'em under a tree and eat 'em after we've caught a fish."

So the cookies were emptied and put on some leaves, and before very long two little shiners were bumping their noses against the side of the pail, trying to swim straight ahead as they had always done.

"They don't know nothin'," said Ainslee; "they might keep still when they're in a pail; let's eat the cookies quick and take 'em up to the *Aqualium*, and then we'll come back and sail pea-pods."

So the two children ate lunch, and then Ainslee put on his boots without lacing, and ran up to the house, leaving Sinny to catch another fish if he liked.

The shiners swam around quite at home in the box when Ainslee put them in, and then he went into the kitchen for some pea-pods and broom splinters. Ann gave him a handful, and he pulled out the peas as he went along, and ate one or two.

Uncle Ainslee, as he passed by, came out of the summer-house which overlooked the meadow.

"What are you going to do now?" said he.

"I'm going to sail boats," said Ainslee; "you come too — won't you?"

Uncle Ainslee followed, and sat down under

the buttonwood-trees, while the children stuck broom splinters into the peas for masts, and sailed them back and forth.

The soft summer wind was blowing; the brook flowed slowly, just rippling over the pebbles, and the grasshoppers chirped from the hay-field. Uncle Ainslee's eyes grew dreamy, and he seemed to be looking far away, beyond the great mountains before them.

"Tell me a story," said Ainslee, suddenly coming out of the brook; "I'm tired of swimming boats."

"What about?" said Uncle Ainslee, rousing himself.

"About a boy," said Ainslee.

"Well," answered Uncle Ainslee, "when I was a boy and played by this brook, I used to look up to that tall mountain, and wonder what was behind it, and this morning I have been thinking of some of the things I have seen since I went away from it, and of one which came to my mind I will tell you now."

IX.

MICHAEL MICHAELOVITCH.

"WHEN I was a boy," began Uncle Ainslee, "I used to sit under these old buttonwood-trees, and read books of travel and adventure, and think that if ever I were old enough, I would see every one of the places I had read about. One Christmas I found in my stocking a book which your mamma had put in it for me, and the money for which she had earned by sewing carpet-rags together for grandma's kitchen-carpet. The name of this book was 'The Exiles of Siberia,' and it was so sweet a story that when you are older, I shall want you to read and enjoy it, just as much as I did. It told of a country called Russia, where snow lies thick on the ground many months in the year, and all who can afford it, go about wrapped up to their eyes in furs, while the poor people wear sheep-skins, with the wool turned in.

"You know how clear and shining ice is. Well once a great Queen, who governed Russia, and whose name was Queen Catherine, had built for

her a palace all in ice, — ice walls and chairs, and tables and sofas; and the weather was so clear and cold that it lasted a long time. They had balls in it, and danced on the ice floors, and, for all I can remember, ate ice-cream from ice plates, and drank iced lemonade from ice goblets. I read of all these things when a boy, as I told you, and it made me want so much to see this country far over the ocean, that at last, eight or nine years ago, I left the warm, beautiful Italy, where I had been for some time, and spent the fall and part of the winter in Russia. When you are older, and can look on maps, and know enough of geography to follow in your mind the roads I travelled, and see the strange towns I stopped in, I shall very likely tell you some stories about them. To-day, though, I shall only tell of something which happened to me in the old city of Moscow, where I stayed nearly a month.

"There was one place to which I often went while there, which is called the Kremlin. It is a palace and a church together, standing on a hill called the Kremlin Terrace, from which you look down upon the city lying on the other side of the river Moskowa, which flows between.

"You went up into the steeple of Trinity Church with me, in the summer, and thought it a very wonderful sight, when you looked down

on that great New York, and looked over to the cities and towns close about it. You tried to count all the steeples you saw, and couldn't well do it, because you had never learned far enough in your numbers. Now imagine every one of these steeples gilded, and every roof painted green, and think how it would have flashed under your eyes, looking down on it all in the sunshine.

"Once, a long time ago, the people who lived in Moscow burned up the whole city, rather than let it fall into the hands of a great army who were coming to take it. The great stone walls were left standing, for fire could not burn them, you know; and so after the enemy had all gone home again, thinking it no use to try and conquer a country where all the people would burn their houses rather than give them up, everybody went to work, and made the palaces and churches more splendid than they were before. I used to think sometimes when I went to the Kremlin, that Aladdin's palace, in the story I told you the other day, must have sprung up there, for in the church there are jewels and gold almost wherever you lay your hand. There are pictures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, all over the walls, and around them are hung strings of diamonds, and rubies, and pearls, such as you never saw. Peo-

ple go in and out all the time, crossing themselves as you saw Bridget do when she took you to her church, and kneeling down before crosses or pictures of Christ, praying aloud.

"You would think with all this splendor in the churches, that the whole city must be like them, and yet when you have gone out from the great walls which surround the Kremlin, though you can still see many beautiful buildings, the houses in which the poor people live are low wooden huts, not much better than the Irish shanties you have seen on some of the rocky ground near Central Park, though they are whitewashed, and have broad red and blue stripes painted on them. The streets are full of deep ruts and holes, and at night there is no gas, except in the larger streets, while the water you have to drink is carried about in large casks, and sold for so much a gallon. People don't drink much of it, however, for everybody has tea instead. Even if you should ask for a glass of water, they would think you couldn't mean it, and would bring you a glass of tea in its place, for in Russia they don't drink tea from cups, but from tumblers; and after it is sweetened, they put in, instead of milk, a slice of lemon, which grandma, I dare say, would think had spoiled the whole thing.

"You have been into Taylor's Saloon with me

to get ice-cream, and thought everything was very fine; but you would open your eyes a good deal wider if you could see a Russian Saloon, or Traktir, as they call it. The great Moskovski Traktir is the handsomest of all. The carpet is thick and soft, so that you hardly hear a footstep. Each table has a sofa before it covered with snow-white cloth; everything is in white, to match the snow you see from the windows; even the waiters wear white trousers, and if you wish, bring you such things to eat as you never heard of, — soup made of peppermint water, and fish, with lumps of ice, and green leaves floating around in it, which tastes just as badly as it sounds; and caviare, which is the roe of a great fish called the sturgeon. Mamma used to give you the roe of the shad last spring, because it had no bones in it, and you never liked it much you know; so you can think how it would taste if you had to eat it raw, with only a little salt sprinkled on it. The Russians think it very delicious, and eat it fresh on bread and butter, or salted down and cut in slices.

"Some of these days I shall tell you more about their queer ways of cooking. I tried a great many things from curiosity, but the white-dressed waiters almost always had to take them away after the first taste, and bring me some-

thing cooked in French instead of Russian fashion. Every Traktir has its organ, like those the hand-organ men carry about in New York, only a dozen times larger; and as you sit and eat, or drink tea, or smoke, they are always grinding away at tunes of which the Russians never seem to tire, for they sit and listen with half-shut eyes, or talk in almost a whisper, so as not to lose the music, hours at a time.

"One thing you would like better than anything I have yet told you, and here comes in my story for which you have been waiting a long time. In the great squares of the city, and sometimes outside the walls, when winter has come on, and everything is frozen solid, they put together boards and posts, and make a sort of wooden hill with steep sides. On this hill they put snow, and pour water over it, which freezes at once, making a firm, smooth, ice hill, from top to bottom. Children and grown people come here with their sleds, and from morning till night there is a continual sliding down. At the foot of every ice hill is a little building, where, if you are a stranger, or do not own a sled, you can hire one for a few copecks, and at the very top is a platform, on which you can stand and rest after drawing it up.

"You would think that many people would be

hurt, but they seldom are, for it is a rule that no one can slide down the side up which you walk with your sled. I had coasted down this hill back of grandpa's many a time when a boy, and had read of these Russian ice hills; so as soon as the first one was ready for anybody and everybody, I went there one afternoon, hired a little sled for a few copecks, and started up."

"What are copecks?" asked Ainslee.

"Little copper coins, like pennies, only very thin and small," said Uncle Ainslee, "and I always carried some in my pockets. Well, as I said, I hired my sled and walked slowly up the ice hill, holding by the railing at the side, for it was very slippery. At the top I stopped to think. I'm a big man, you know, and my sled was very small. I sat down on it, and then the question was, what to do with my legs. If I doubled them up they were in my way, and if I stretched them out full length I was sure they would be run over. One old Russian with a long white beard, and wrapped in a very dirty sheepskin, went down belly-gutter, as if he were not over ten years old."

"What's belly-gutter?" said Ainslee.

"Ho!" said Sinny, who had been listening with great attention, "don't you know? It's sliding down hill on your belly."

"Well, but," said Ainslee, "don't it hurt? I should think it would rub all your skin off."

"No," said Uncle Ainslee, laughing. "You have the sled under you, but still I never liked it as well as the common way."

"Oh," said Ainslee, "I didn't know you meant on a sled."

"Yes," Uncle Ainslee went on. "I watched this old man to the bottom, and then concluded I'd kneel down on mine, and start in that way. So off I went; but somehow or other, either Russian sleds were different from American ones, or else I had forgotten how to manage, for all at once, there was my sled going down without me, and I was holding on to the railing to keep myself from following after.

"I picked myself up, quite ashamed, but nobody laughed. Nobody does laugh much in Russia, and here they were all too busy with sliding to think about anybody's tumble. A little boy who had seen my fall, as he dragged up his own sled, ran down after mine, and brought up both together. He didn't look like a Russian to me, though he wore the Russian dress, and said 'No,' in Russian, when I handed him some copecks for his trouble. I felt sure then that he was not a native, for they always take all they can get, whether rich or poor.

"After I had put myself like a tailor on my sled, so that my great legs need not be in my way, we slid down side by side, faster and faster, to the bottom. Going up, I said a few words in German to the boy, who looked pleased, and answered at once. So we went on talking, and I found his father had come from Germany when this boy was only a baby, many years before, and was now a tea merchant in Moscow.

"I saw him every day after this, and almost always with another boy, a real little Russian, twelve or fourteen years old, who could speak nothing else, and who was the son of a rich serf, or slave, — so Hans told me. Hans was the German boy's name, and Michael Michaelovitch the Russian's; and after a little time we became such good friends, that he asked me home with him. There was only his father there, for his mother and baby sister had died not long after they came to Russia; and though they lived in a splendid house, there were only servants about them, and they were often very lonely. I went to see them almost daily, and always found this little Russian boy with Hans.

"One day I had taken off my great fur-lined coat, and laid it down in an outer room. As it happened, I had put my watch, which had just been mended, into the breast-pocket, in a little

box, and did not think to take it out. I was there an hour or two, and it was only on leaving that I remembered it. I put my hand in the pocket: nothing there. Then I felt in each one, for I knew that I had it as I came into the house.

"'What is the matter?' said Hans, who had followed me.

"I told him the trouble, saying also, that if I had not known it to be there when I came in, I should not have spoken of it to them, but I was afraid some of the servants had taken it.

"'All Russians steal!' said Hans's father, 'and the watch will be found here, I am sure. Michael has it, probably, for he has always wanted Hans's, and search shall be made at once.'

"Early next morning it was brought to me, and I went at once to Hans, to ask where they had found it. Michael, the Russian boy, was being led away by a gray-coated policeman, looking pale and frightened; and as I went in, Hans met me at the door.

"'You have it,' said he; 'all Russians are alike, and Michael, who stole it, will be well paid.'

"'How?' said I. 'You would not send so young a boy to prison?'

"'No,' said Hans; 'he is on his way to the punishment-house; his back will pay for what he has done.'

"'Is he to be whipped?' said I.

"'A hundred strokes, more or less!' answered Hans. 'He is a serf, and they will not be sparing.'

"'I do not want him to be whipped,' said I; 'that is no way to make him better. I must go after him.'

"'No, no,' said Hans; 'all serfs are flogged; that is the only way to treat them.'

"'But I cannot have it,' said I; 'come with me at once, Hans, so that you can interpret for me. He must be punished in some other way.'

"Hans held back, but finally yielded, and we hurried along toward a low building in one of the side streets off the great square. In Russia, I must tell you, they had until a few years ago many thousands of slaves, or serfs, as they called them, who had suffered for many, many years, till they were made free, as our good President Lincoln made ours free. If a slave displeased his master or mistress, he could be sent to a punishment-house with a note, and receive as many lashes as had been ordered. Sometimes the slaves deserved punishment, but quite as often they were sent there by cruel and unreasonable owners, and whipped very dreadfully.

"As we went into this place, Michael was being tied to a post, while a man stood by with a long

willow rod in his hand, just ready to begin the beating. There were blood-stains on the post, and from another room I heard the sound of falling strokes, and a low cry now and then. It was sickening. Hans went forward to the policeman who stood at the upper end of the room; he spoke in Russian, so that I could not easily understand, but the man seemed to object.

"'He says,' said Hans, 'that the boy was sent here for punishment, and must receive it. If I had money, though, he could easily be bribed.'

"This made matters easy. In a few moments I had handed him one of the dirty bits of Russian paper money, Michael was untied, and we were out of the low, stifling room, into the clear cold air again. Michael said not a word, but looked at me, as if he could not understand things at all. When we had reached the house, I told him, partly in the little Russian I knew, but more with Hans's help, why I had saved him from this dreadful punishment, and that I hoped he would always hereafter be an honest boy.

"He said nothing, but as I went away, burst into tears, and kissed my cloak, as serfs often do, so that I felt sure he was grateful for what I had done.

"It was only a day or two afterward, that, turning a corner in one of those queer little Rus-

sian carriages which they call droshkys, I was thrown out, and sprained my right arm and wrist severely. Hans's father, when he heard of it, would not allow me to remain at the hotel, but took me at once to his house. Michael was my little servant, and for a fortnight waited upon me as nobody had ever done before. He taught me a good deal of Russian, and through long days Hans and Michael and I became very intimate. I found that Michael had never been told by any one how wicked it was to steal, and had been tempted by the shining watch so strongly that he could hardly help taking it. He was a very bright, quick boy, and before we parted I think he understood very well how good it is to be honest for the sake of honesty, and not through fear. I told them of America, and of all the strange countries I had seen, and both boys wished that they could leave Russia and come here.

"The day before I was to leave, Michael came to me and begged me to buy him and take him with me.

"'I cannot,' I told him; 'you know you have another master, and no foreigner can buy or own a serf. I wish I could.'

"Poor Michael! He had set his heart on being bought by me, and could not bear to be disappointed.

"'Some day you may be free,' I said, 'and if you are always honest and true, you will be happy, whether free or not.'

"This sprain had kept me in Moscow much longer than I intended, and I hurried away, and started on my homeward journey only a few days afterward.

"In the course of two or three years, the good news came to us that all the Russian serfs had been freed. I thought then of Michael, and hoped he would have more chance to grow up a good man, than if he had still been a slave.

"Last spring, just before I left San Francisco, walking down by the docks one day, I saw, overseeing the landing from a ship of some chests of tea, a young man whose face I was sure I knew. By and by he turned, and came up the quay, and I looked at him earnestly. As he saw me he stopped; then running forward, bowed low, and touched his forehead to my coat-flaps, as the Russians do. I knew Michael in a moment, and when I called him by name, he answered me in very good English, which astonished me, as when I knew him, he could speak nothing but Russian. When I had taken him up to the hotel he told me the whole story.

"After I left, Hans had been so eager to learn English, that his father had engaged an English

lady as teacher, who came to live with them, and spoke nothing else to Hans. Michael, who was always with him, of course learned it also, and the governess, finding him to be a very bright, intelligent boy, had taught him to read and write English.

"As Hans grew older, his eagerness to visit America increased, and at last, just after the emancipation of the serfs, he left Russia, and after travelling through America, settled down in San Francisco as a tea merchant. Michael had shortly after come over to be his clerk, and after his story was ended, I went with him to Hans's store. I had passed it many a time, not knowing whose it was, and you can think what a pleasant meeting I had. When I left some days afterward, they gave me a great chest of Russian tea. It is what grandma calls her headache tea, because she thinks it cures her headaches. But see how late it is. We must go up to dinner."

"He tells good stories — don't he?" said Ainslee to Sinny, as Uncle Ainslee got up and walked slowly on.

"I guess he does," said Sinny. "I wish I was a Russian."

"Why?" asked Ainslee.

"'Cause I love tea," said Sinny, "and mother don't ever let me have only the bottom o' the cup."

"Well," said Ainslee, as they reached grandma's door, "you grow up fast as ever you can, and go there when you get big, and maybe you can be one o' those waiters with white trousers, and drink it all the time. Good-by, Sinny."

"Good-by said Sinny." "I do believe I'm going to be a Russian."

X.

TWO PUMPKIN PIES.

NOVEMBER came, gray and chilly. Long ago Ainslee would have been at home in New York, but grandfather and grandmother desired that once more all the children should meet for a Thanksgiving dinner at the old homestead. Uncle Arthur, the oldest of all, was coming from far out West, with his wife and children; Uncle John from nearer home; and with Uncle Ainslee, who had not been with them at Thanksgiving time for ten years, and Ainslee's father and mother, there would be such a party as one doesn't often see.

Dr. Blimber, the largest gobble turkey in the barn-yard, received a double measure of corn every day, and would come very near being a twenty-five pounder, everybody said; while old Speckle's most promising chickens, shut up in a coop, received daily rations of Indian stirabout from the hands of Ainslee and Sinny. On the barn-floor piles of yellow pumpkins lay; the apple bins were filled with wonderful red Spit-

zenbergs and pumpkin sweets; and the old cider-mill creaked from morning till night while Mr. Culligan and Joe turned the arms of the great press.

Ainslee, in warm coat and mittens, divided his time about equally between the aquarium, the cider barrels, and the kitchen, where such wonders in cookery were going on, that he said it was almost as nice as living in a baker's shop. Every kind of pie and cake which grandma and Nancy pushed into the great brick oven, had a little one to match; and Ainslee being generous, and always ready to share his goodies, Sinny's face came to wear an expectant expression; and between the claims of the straw which he always had by him for sucking cider, and the attractions of the little tin pie-pans, he really suffered. Fortunately the inhabitants of the aquarium were all in delicate health, owing to the fact that Sinny had emptied the salt-box into it, thinking that as the sheep were fond of it, there was no reason why the fish shouldn't be. Uncle Ainslee finding it out, had at once changed the water for them; but one tadpole had died immediately, the turtle hadn't put his head out for two days afterward, and the shiners hid under the stones, and only swam out when poked with a little stick. Ponto having upset the flower-

pot, the two black crickets had run away, and probably gone into winter-quarters; and the brown worm, owing to cold weather and the want of leaves, had shriveled all up, and would never be anything but a skin. Thus an amount of running was required, which kept them with such appetites that Nancy said "'Twould be just as easy to feed a regiment as them two little stuffers, and why they didn't bust and done with it, she couldn't see."

Summer plays were past. The brook, swollen full by autumn rains, was almost ready to be frozen over. The trees had put off their livery of gold and scarlet, and stood bare and brown; while every stray nut had been gathered in by the squirrels, who still ran up and down the great butternut-tree on sunshiny days. Ainslee's garden, in which he had planted beans, a potatoe, and a sunflower, had for some reason not done well. Careful digging had resulted in the discovery of two small potatoes, which had immediately been boiled and eaten, and one sunflower hung in the barn, drying for the hens.

This afternoon grandpa was going to the depot for Uncle Arthur, but the train did not get in till nearly six o'clock, and all the day lay before them. So mamma proposed, that, as it was quite pleasant, the two children should take a

basket, go to the meadow where the cows pastured in summer, and gather beech-nuts from the wooded hill which rose at its back.

Grandma gave them each cookies and an apple turn-over, and they set out, swinging their baskets, and taking little runs now and then from sheer happiness. Through the meadow and up the little hill was only a short walk, hardly half a mile, but there were very few nuts to be found. The school-boys had been there before them, and only a stray one now and then was found.

"I wouldn't be such a greedy boy, not to leave a single nut for anybody," said Ainslee, much disgusted.

"Yes, you would," said Sinny. "You would n't leave one here now if you could find any."

"Well," said Ainslee, struck by this new view of the case, "I'm a little boy and don't ought to. Big boys ought to leave nuts for little boys, but little boys don't ever have to leave 'em for big ones."

"I'm tired of hunting for 'em, any way," said Sinny. "Let's sit down on this moss and eat our cookies."

So the two children sat down under a great beech-tree, and began to eat with as much enjoyment as if they had not breakfasted two or three hours before.

Rattling down on Ainslee's head came the husk of a nut.

"You stop firing things," said he, turning suddenly upon Sinny, who sat blissfully rocking back and forth.

"I ain't firing nothing at all," answered Sinny, when down came another between them. Ainslee looked up, and a very red squirrel looked down, and then ran to the top of the tree, chattering as he went.

"I guess he lives in that tree," said Sinny. "Maybe he's the Little Squirrel that didn't know how to get his own nuts, that your Uncle Ainslee telled about."

"Well, but," said Ainslee, "this one has got nuts; so it can't be the one, unless he learned better after his father and mother was dead."

"I guess he did," said Sinny, pulling away at some dead leaves and sticks, and uncovering a hole at the foot of the tree. "My! you just look in there!"

Ainslee turned and saw a great pile of beech and butternuts filling up completely this hole under the root, and putting in his hand, drew out as many as he could hold.

"Oh, there's heaps of 'em," said he; "let's fill our baskets full."

The squirrel seemed to think matters were

going all wrong, for he scolded and scolded, and once ran partly down the tree, as if he would interfere if he dared. The baskets were filled in a trice, and both boys turned toward home. Ainslee walked slowly on till they came to the open meadow, and then sat down suddenly on a stone.

"We've taken away most all the squirrel's nuts," said he; "and he can't get any more 'cause it's most winter."

"There's some left," said Sinny.

"I know it," said Ainslee; "but when they're all gone, what'll he do?"

"I guess maybe the other squirrels will let him have some o' theirs," said Sinny, after thinking a moment.

"I don't believe they would, 'cause they've all got wives and children, and couldn't spare any," said Ainslee. "I guess I'll put 'em back."

"Oh I wouldn't," said Sinny. "If it's Little Squirrel, he oughter be paid for being so lazy; he used to be awful lazy."

"So he did," answered Ainslee, getting up and walking on a few steps, then turning again. "He ain't lazy now, any way," said he, "'cause he's picked all these, and it would hurt him to have to starve to death."

"Well," said Sinny, who seemed to think of nothing more to say against it, "let's hurry, then."

Back to the hill the two children trotted, put every nut into the hole, even including the few they had picked up. In the very bottom of one of the baskets still lay half a cooky.

"I'll put that in too," said Ainslee; "maybe he never had a cooky;" and he covered the whole with the leaves and sticks they had pulled aside a little time before, and then started again for home, with a very happy face.

"Why, how bright you look," said mamma, meeting them at the front gate. "Uncle John has come, and little John and Lizzie are in a hurry to see you."

Sinny turned, and ran toward home, as if he thought his good times were over, now that other children had come, and Ainslee went into the house. The few hours before the train's coming passed quickly in showing the swing and aquarium; and when the three western cousins appeared, very little tired with their long journey, there was, after the first shyness wore off, a perfect bedlam, which was only silenced by Uncle Ainslee going away with them, and telling a story, which kept them perfectly quiet till bed-time.

The few days before Thanksgiving went rapidly by. Sinny found himself quite as much in demand as before, and the seven children were

"everywhere to onct," Mr. Culligan said, "and had liked to pulled near all the oats out, gettin' straws to suck cider with." At last came *the* day, — cold, to be sure, but bright and sunny.

"Put on my biggest jacket, nurse," said Ainslee, as he was being dressed for church. "Uncle Ainslee says boys always burst the buttons off their jackets Thanksgiving Day."

"It's no such a thing," said nurse, "unless they're like pigs. You might, though, — a boy that has so much to do with 'em."

Ainslee was about to answer this rather disagreeable speech angrily, but grandpa's voice was heard from the hall, asking if every one was ready, and he ran down to join the other children. They did not go to the church over the river to-day, but down to the village, and there were three pews full of Grandpa Walton's children and grandchildren. Ainslee understood almost all of Mr. Parker's sermon, and was very much interested in hearing how the poor Pilgrims at Plymouth had to eat just as little as they could live on, for a long, long time, till at last the ship came sailing in from England, and they had a real Thanksgiving time. Toward the very end, however, he couldn't help thinking how Dr. Blimber would look all stretched out on a platter, and whether Mrs. Blimber would know him if she should see him.

Church ended quickly, and Ainslee, as he took his father's hand, found that Mr. Parker was going home with them. Such a delicious smell as there was all through the house! Dinner was not ready till two, but the smell was almost a dinner in itself. At last the door opened into the dining-room, and there was such a long table set for fourteen people, with a smaller one close by, for the five children. Ainslee being the youngest, and there not being room for him with the children, sat at the big table, between Mr. Parker and Uncle Ainslee; and while grandpa carved Dr. Blimber, took the opportunity to find out just exactly how his aunts and uncles looked. By and by his plate came to him with a nice piece of white meat, and all sorts of vegetables. Ainslee was very fond of almost every kind but carrots, and there on his plate was at least half of one, which somebody, not knowing his tastes, had put there. Ainslee tasted his turkey, but the great, bright, yellow carrot took away all his appetite.

"I can't stand it," said he to himself. "I'll eat it up just as fast as ever I can, so's to get it out of the way," and he swallowed it in great mouthfuls.

"Why!" said grandma, looking from her end of the table, "how the dear boy loves carrot! Do give him another, grandpa."

Ainslee laid down his knife and fork, and burst into a roar.

"My dear child," said mamma, getting up hastily and coming round to him, "what is the matter?"

"I don't want another! I can't eat another!" howled Ainslee. "I'm sick now."

"Don't want another what?" said mamma, who, busy talking, had not noticed grandma's remark.

"Another carrot," said Ainslee. "I've eated one, just as fast, so's not to have to look at it, and I can't eat any more."

"You need not," said mamma, soothingly, while such a laugh went round the table, that Ainslee, indignant at first, finally joined in, and laughed harder than anybody. By and by the table was cleared, and Mary brought in and placed before grandma an enormous pumpkin pie, baked in a very large, shallow milk-pan. Ainslee was so taken up with this, that he had no eyes for the smaller pies, or the round plum-pudding before grandpa; and he was still more surprised, when grandpa, filling his glass, said, —

"Let us drink to Pumpkin Pie."

Everybody stood up, and everybody laughed a little as they drank, though Mr. Parker seemed a little puzzled, and Ainslee thought it so mysterious that he could not keep still.

"What makes you drink to pumpkin pie, grandpa?" said he.

"Tell him, father," said Uncle Arthur. "This generation should know all about it as well as we."

"One of you boys can," said grandpa. "I'm out of the way of telling stories. You may do it, Ainslee."

"Don't you do any such thing," said grandma, half laughing, and quite red in the face. "What do you suppose these children will think?"

"We will find out pretty soon," said Uncle Ainslee. "When I've eaten my share, mother, every one who doesn't know about it shall be told."

So, when the great pie had gone about the table, and everybody was busily picking out nuts, Uncle Ainslee leaned back comfortably in his chair and began: —

"How old grandpa was, I can't exactly say, and how old grandma was, I couldn't tell either; but it's a certain fact that John Walton (that's grandpa) was the handsomest young man in all Charleston, and Sybil Huntingdon (that's grandma) the very prettiest girl in Windsor. Where they met, and how they met, grandpa knows better than I do; but he at once fell violently in love, and when Miss Sybil came to make a visit at

Charleston, he spent so much money in fine clothes, that he came very near having none at all left. Try as he would, grandpa could never find out whether Miss Sybil cared anything for him or not; and when she went home to Windsor, she left such an uneasy, uncomfortable, worrying man behind her, that it's a wonder how he ever got through the two months which followed. Finally, quite unable to bear it one day longer, he made up his mind he would take a holiday, put on his most magnificent suit of clothes, ride up to Windsor, and ask Miss Sybil if she would marry him. If you want to know how he looked, children, turn round a moment."

Everybody turned to look at the portrait which hung over the dining-room mantel, — a young man with bright brown eyes and hair like Uncle Ainslee, dressed in a very short-waisted blue coat with brass buttons, a nankeen vest, from which seemed to rush out three full cambric ruffles, and very tight breeches, buckled at the knee over some equally tight black silk stockings.

"Is *that* grandpa?" said all the children together.

"I never knew that," said Ainslee. "I thought it was Abraham, or Noah, or somebody out of the Bible."

"Not exactly," said Uncle Ainslee, laughing

at grandma's look of astonishment at Ainslee. "That is grandpa in his courting suit, and just as he looked that late September morning, ever and ever so many years ago, when he stepped into his one-horse chaise, and drove along the beautiful river road to Windsor. He made believe he was enjoying the ride, but the nearer he got to Windsor, the more his heart went pit-a-pat, till at last, when he drove up Common Hill, and into the great gate back of Parson Huntingdon's, he had almost a mind to drive home again to Charleston as fast as he could go. Old Nat met him and took the horse, and he walked round to the front door. There sat Miss Sybil at the parlor window with great-grandmother, sewing, and looking so lovely, that grandpa thought he should certainly die if she said 'No.' In he went, and Miss Sybil was very much astonished of course, and then great-grandmother, after she had talked a little while, said she must go and see about dinner, and so left them together.

"Now Miss Sybil was very famous for gardening, just as she is to this day, and she always had flowers in her garden to the last moment that Jack Frost would allow it. So, after grandpa had talked about the weather and his ride, and told her how all his relations were, he stared at her in such a dreadful kind of way that she

turned very red, and dropped her work, and broke her needle, and finally, quite desperate, asked him if he wouldn't like to go into the garden and see her flowers. Of course he said 'Yes,' and out they both went. What happened then you will know by and by.

"In the mean time great-grandmother had given black Dilly orders about the dinner, and gone up to her room to put on her best cap, and tell great-grandpa, that John Walton had come way from Charleston to see Sybil, and she should n't wonder if they were going to settle matters right away.

"Now black Dilly had a daughter named Dolly, then about ten years old, whose business was to set tables, run of errands, etc. If Topsy had only been written about then, Dolly certainly would never have been Dolly any more, but Topsy to the end of the chapter, for if she could have stood on her head while setting that table, she certainly would have done it. As it was, she had a sort of war-dance over every knife and fork she put on, and had her ears boxed at least twice by her mother, as she whirled back and forth from the kitchen.

"At last, bread and butter, and everything, were on the table, and Dilly put into her hands just such an immense pumpkin pie as you have

seen to-day. Dolly had got half-way across the dining-room with it, when Miss Sybil's gray kitten raced across the yard, closely pursued by somebody's dog. Down went the pumpkin pie into a chair standing by the table, and off went Dolly to think nothing more of pie or pie-plates till dinner was ready, and Dilly had tired herself out with calling her to come and wait. Then she took her station near great-grandmother, with her little waiter in her hand, and twisting her woolly head half off, in order to see Mr. Walton as he came in. Great-grandfather took his place, and waited patiently for the young people, and soon Miss Sybil appeared, and sat down in her usual seat, red as one of her own roses, while grandpa walked behind her, looking happy enough to hug the whole family, but so blind with bashfulness, that he shook hands carefully with Dolly, and said, 'How *do* you do, Mr. Huntingdon?' till that gentleman thought him the craziest lover he had ever seen, and said, —

"'Take a seat Mr. Walton; pray take a seat.'

"Mr. Walton drew out the chair by Miss Sybil and sat down suddenly, but rose up with a bound.

"'Land of Goshen!' said great-grandmother, standing up, 'look at his coat-tails!'

" 'O Lord! O Lord!' screamed Dolly, throwing her apron over her head and running into the kitchen; 'he's sot down in the pumpkin pie!'

"Dilly didn't wait to hear who, but rushed into the dining-room with a basin and towel. There stood grandpa with plastered coat-tails, and pumpkin running down those beautiful breeches and black silk stockings, on to great-grandmother's new carpet, hardly able to move for mortification, while Parson Huntingdon lay back in his chair and laughed till he cried, and Miss Sybil was just as bad. There was nothing to do but to take him up-stairs and give him fresh clothes, while Dilly cleaned the others; so great-grandfather led the way to the study, and opened his closet. Plenty of clothes there: but you see grandpa is rather a small man, and Parson Huntingdon was very big, — six feet high, and fat, too, — and the figure grandpa cut when he came down again was something wonderful.

"The coat-sleeves were so long he had to roll them up, and the cambric ruffles were quite lost in a wilderness of waistcoat, while the breeches hung in folds over the knee-buckles. However, he had got over the first shock, and was prepared to have some fun out of it, though he has been heard to say, that if he had waited till after din-

ner to propose to Miss Sybil, he is afraid she would never have said anything but 'No.' "

Here Uncle Ainslee suddenly left the dining-room, and was gone some little time, while the children looked curiously at grandpa's white hair and grandma's cap, as if it were hard to believe they had ever been young. Presently the door opened, and Uncle Ainslee came in in such a dress, that everybody got up to look at him. How he had ever got into it, it was impossible to tell, for he was as tall as great-grandfather Huntingdon, though not fat yet. There he stood, blue coat, cambric ruffles, and all, holding out his coat-tails as if he had just risen up from the pie.

"Yes," said grandpa, "the identical suit. You didn't suppose I was going to throw it away, did you? Not I; though where Ainslee got hold of it I don't see."

"He's been to the big chest in the garret," said grandma. "It's been there for years, with my wedding dress, that you never'd let me dye or anything."

"Once more," said grandpa, quite stirred up, and rising from his chair,—"Children, it's about the last time we can all hope to keep Thanksgiving together — once more, then, drink to 'Pumpkin Pie.' "

"Three cheers for pumpkin pie! shouted

little John, and anybody who went by just then must have thought Grandpa Walton's family gone crazy, for such a shout came from the old dining-room, that Ponto ran around the house barking, and every glass on the table shook.

XI.

WINTER TIME.

It was the day after Christmas. How full Ainslee's stocking had been I don't know, but if all the things lying on the bed before him had been Christmas gifts, it must have taken at least two of his grandfather's long-legged ones to hold them. It was broad daylight, almost dinner-time, and yet there sat Ainslee in his little dressing-gown, leaning back against the pillows, and not half so fat as when we first saw him walking up from the barn with the chicken he had hugged to death. Ainslee would turn very red if you should ask him what was the matter, so I must begin at the very beginning and tell you myself.

Uncle Arthur, with his three children, had stayed at grandpa's till nearly the middle of December, and little John and Lizzie too, so that when you counted Sinny, who was there every day, and sometimes two or three times a day, there were seven children, "raising Cain every blessed minute," Ann said. Rainy days, mamma had a fire built in the old garret where she had

had a stove put up, and here they played games, and cracked butternuts, and dressed themselves in the old-fashioned clothes they dragged from the chests and trunks; and when they were tired of this, raced down to the cellar and ate apples, or sucked grandpa's cider, till it was a wonder that he had one drop left.

By and by came a morning when Ainslee had to say good-by to each one, and was left alone again; and for a day or two he was so lonesome and forlorn, mamma hardly knew what to do with him. Very little snow had fallen, so far, and he ran about out-of-doors quite as much as in the fall.

This particular morning he and Sinny had been cracking the ice in the Aquarium with a hammer, and looking through the holes to see if the shiners were still alive, and now, a little tired, were sitting on a log and resting. Ann came out with a basket of clothes to hang on the line, and old Mrs. Culligan, who always came up to help with the washing, walked out from the back-kitchen and toward the oldest well, with a pail in her hand.

There were two wells at grandpa's. One close by the house, from which the water was carried into the kitchen, and another very old one, dug years and years before, and with a long well-

sweep, which had been left there, because all the children when they came home, liked to find the old well as it had been when they were little, and to drink the clear, cold water from the same bucket.

Mrs. Culligan would never rinse her clothes in any water that did not come from this old well, and Ainslee knew that she would carry in two or three pailfuls before she stopped.

"I say, Sinny," said he; "I'm goin' to get on the end o' the well-sweep and sit there, and Mrs. Culligan won't know what's holding it down, and she'll pull and pull, and when it begins to go up, I'll jump off."

"Come on, then," said Sinny, who thought it would be fine fun, and off they ran.

The well-sweep was fifteen or twenty feet long, and so heavy that its own weight would lift up the bucket after anybody had lowered it into the water. The end rested in quite a thicket of bushes, over which a Frost Grape climbed, so that even though the leaves were gone, Ainslee was nicely hidden, and nobody would have known he was there.

Sinny walked toward the summer-house, looking very innocent as Mrs. Culligan came out with her pail, and setting it down by the well, took hold of the bucket and began to pull, while the fifty pounds of mischief on the end sat still.

"What on airth's the matter with the sweep?" said Mrs. Culligan."—See page 158.

"What on airth's the matter with the sweep?" said Mrs. Culligan. "It went well enough a minute ago," and she took a stronger hold, and gave a great jerk. Up went Ainslee into the air, too late for his jump.

"Land alive!" said Mrs. Culligan, so astonished, that she let go of the rope at once. Thump went the well-sweep down again, and thump went Ainslee with it, rolling over and over as he touched the ground, and, finally, picking himself up with a very scared face, crying louder than he had ever been known to before. Sinny turned and ran home fast as his legs would take him, and Mrs. Culligan, pouncing on Ainslee, carried him into the house, and set him down before his mother, who had run into the kitchen when she heard his screaming.

"Of all the boys that ever I see, he's the mischievousest," said Mrs. Culligan. "You never can know one minute what he's going to do the next. You'd better see if he hain't broke some bones."

Ainslee by this time was very pale, and mamma picked him up and carried him into his grandmother's room.

"What now?" said grandpa.

"He's been a-ridin' on the well-sweep," said Mrs. Culligan, who had followed, "an' I was

took so all of a heap a-seein' him up there, that I jest let go, an' he went down bang."

"Ask Mr. Culligan to go for the doctor," said mamma, who had been feeling of Ainslee's arms and legs. "He has broken his collar-bone, I'm afraid."

Mamma lifted him again and carried him to her own room. By the time Dr. Marsh got there, he was undressed, and lying very still, for every motion hurt him.

"Been haying again?" asked the doctor, as he walked into the room.

"No, sir," said Ainslee, who didn't want to tell how it had happened, if he could help it.

"He went up on the well-sweep, and down again with it," said mamma, "and in falling he has broken his collar-bone, I think. It is swelling badly there."

"To be sure, to be sure," said the doctor, after examining Ainslee. "It must be set at once," and after a moment's looking into a little bag he carried, he turned to the bed again.

Before Ainslee could object to the very strong smell of something on a handkerchief which was put to his face, he didn't know anything at all. When he opened his eyes again, it was to find himself still flat on his back, something pressing on the bones of his shoulder and neck,

and Dr. Marsh by the window, dropping a dark liquid from a bottle into a spoon.

"What you been a-doin'?" said Ainslee.

"Fixing you up, so that in two or three weeks you can go out and break your neck," answered Dr. Marsh. "If you go on like this, you will be all in little bits by the time you are a man, and mamma will have to carry you about in a carpet-bag. One of your bones is broken in two now, and it won't take long to do the rest."

"Yes it will," said Ainslee, beginning to cry again. "I wouldn't a-gone up if I'd known I should crack myself comin' down. This thing on my shoulder hurts me. I want it off."

"Don't touch it," said mamma, as Ainslee gave the pad a little pull. "That is to keep the bones together, and you must try to be very patient with it. The stiller you are, the sooner you can get up again."

"Can I go down to supper?" asked Ainslee.

"No, indeed," said the doctor, coming up with the tea-spoon, "nor to a good many suppers. You must lie still at least a week, and you will have your suppers brought up on a little waiter."

"Nothing but suppers?" said Ainslee. "No breakfasts?"

"Yes, yes," said Dr. Marsh. "Take this

now, and it will keep you from having a headache."

"No it won't," said Ainslee, "for I've got one now;" but he swallowed the medicine, which did not taste bad at all, and the doctor went away in a few minutes.

"Grandpa brought me a letter from papa, just before you were hurt," said mamma, sitting down by the bed, and laying her cool hand on his forehead. "What do you think it says in it?"

"I don't know; what does it?" asked Ainslee.

"Papa wants us to stay here all winter," mamma answered. "He must be in California until May, for he is doing something with Uncle Ainslee, by which he expects to make a great deal of money. So instead of going back to New York the first of January, we shall stay right on here. How shall you like that?"

"First rate," said Ainslee, "only I want to go to school."

"You will not be able to go anywhere before January," said mamma. "I do hope, having to lie still so long, with all the trouble it brings, will keep you out of so much mischief when you get well. Poor Mrs. Culligan is crying now over your broken bones."

"She didn't break 'em," said Ainslee. "I did it every speck my own self. Call her up here, mamma."

Mamma called her, and presently Mrs. Culligan came in with red eyes, and cried again, as she saw him on his back.

"Deary me!" said she. "To think that you really did break a bone! I wouldn't a-pulled you along in so, if I'd a-thought you was anything more than scared."

"You didn't hurt," said Ainslee. "I say, Mrs. Culligan, won't you bake me a little round short-cake, just like the one you did when I came down to play with Jo?"

"That I will," said Mrs. Culligan, "an' I'll bring it you to-morrow."

When to-morrow came, Ainslee did not want it, for his head ached and he was very feverish. This lasted only a day or two, and then he was hungry all the time, and wanted more than Dr. Marsh thought he ought to have. He grew very tired of lying still, and if Uncle Ainslee had been at home, would have begged for stories all day. Grandpa told him some, and so did mamma, and she read him a great many. Sinny came down again, the same day Ainslee was hurt, and cried so forlornly when he heard of the broken bone, that Ann, who had meant to scold him very

hard, changed her mind, and gave him a cake. Ainslee called for him, when he grew a little better, and Sinny sat on the foot of the bed and told him everything he could think of that was going on.

Christmas came while he was still in bed. Mamma hung up grandpa's largest stocking for him, and Ainslee had a locomotive and train of cars, which ran all about the room when they were wound up; a music-box, which played five tunes, and a bag of marbles; candy, of course, and I can't tell you how many other things.

Ainslee gave Sinny a duck which swam about in a basin of water when a little magnet was held before it; a steamboat which did its sailing on the floor, and was wound up beforehand, like the locomotive; and the "History of the Five Little Pigs." Nurse, who never had got over his falling into the pig-pen, said he ought to have kept this, and had it read to him every day.

So you see it was quite a Merry Christmas, and the day after was merrier still, for Ainslee, who had sat up in bed all the morning looking at his new playthings, was dressed and carried downstairs, and when the doctor came, was sitting up in grandpa's great chair, having a very good time, with a bowl of chicken soup and a saucer of jelly.

"Mayn't I begin to walk right away?" said he.

"To-morrow," said Dr. Marsh. "Only a little though, for you are not strong yet, but more the next day, and perhaps all you want the day after."

"When may I go out-doors?" asked Ainslee. "Look at all the snow — and there's my new mittens 'most spoiling 'cause they can't make snow-balls. See 'em! Grandpa put 'em in my stocking, and there's red, white, and blue round the tops. Ain't they nice?"

"Splendid!" said the doctor. "Now, good-by, for I'm not coming again till you break somewhere else," and he ran out through the snow to his gig, sending a great ball against the window as Ainslee looked out.

"Oh let me have some for ice-cream, like what Lizzie told about making," said Ainslee. "Just a little, mamma."

Mamma hesitated a moment, but finally went for some milk and sugar. Ainslee squeezed the juice of one of his oranges into a bowl, and then put in the milk and sugar, and mamma stirred in the newly-fallen snow till the mixture was thick like real ice-cream. Sinny, who had just come down, had his share, and mamma, who tasted it, thought it so good, that she said she didn't know but she should make a great bowlful all for herself.

The days went swiftly by. Ainslee was well again, and in so much new mischief, even without Sinny, who went to school every day now, that at last it was decided that he too should go. Then the question came up, to which one? There were two schools: one large one in the village, a full mile away, which had three departments; the Primary, the Grammar School, and the High School, to which almost all the large boys and girls in town went. The other one was only a small District School, half a mile or so from them, and kept this winter by a very good teacher, it was said. Only twenty or thirty children went to it, and Mrs. Barton thought it would be better for Ainslee, than sending him to the Primary School where there were almost twice as many.

Ainslee knew his letters, and that was all. Indeed he would not have known those, had it not been for trying to teach the baby, who was just old enough now to pull himself up by chairs, and to say parts of very little words. Sinny could spell pretty well in three or four letters, and rather looked down on Ainslee, who did not care a bit.

"Papa says he don't want me to have little specks o' legs, an' no shoulders, like lots o' the New York boys," Ainslee said. "I'm gwin' to be a real country boy, and grow eleventeen feet

tall. I could lick you this minute if I was a mind to, Sinny."

Sinny stood on the backdoor step, making a final call before going home to supper, and, at first, thought he would ask him to try it; but remembering a punch or two received from him that very day, thought, on the whole, he had better not, and so kept still.

"To-morrow's Wednesday, and I'm going to school," Ainslee went on, after waiting a moment.

"Which you goin' to?" asked Sinny.

"Yourn," said Ainslee; "Miss Barrett's school, and I'm going to take my dinner every day."

Grandma called just then, and Sinny ran home. Mamma, who had walked down this afternoon to see Miss Barrett, and to find out what books Ainslee would need, had bought him a Spelling-book and Reader in the village, and a card with the Multiplication Table on it. Ainslee was so excited, he could hardly eat his supper, and looked at the pictures in the Reader till bed-time.

Next morning came, and Ainslee *would* put on his rubber boots before breakfast, which he ate very fast indeed, in order that he might be sure to be in time. Grandma put up a delightful lunch of biscuit and butter, and a mince turnover, in his tin box; and Ainslee, after a hug which almost choked mamma, stumped out, swinging

his books in their strap, just as if he had always been to school. Sinny met him outside the gate, his books in a strap too, and a little basket in his hand.

"What you got for your dinner, Sinny?" asked Ainslee. "I've got mince-pie turnover for mine."

"I've got a sassage, an' two apples, an' a lot o' bread and butter," said Sinny. "You give me a bite o' your pie, an' I'll give you two bites o' my apple."

Two or three children came along just then, who said, "Holloa, Sinny!" and looked sharply at Ainslee. He knew one of them a little, whose name was Tom Martin, and who was dragging a red sled after him.

"Oh, can you ride on a sled?" said Ainslee. "Will the teacher let you?"

"I guess she couldn't hinder us," said Tom. "She's cross enough to, if she could."

"Is she cross?" Ainslee began, but Tom gave him a jerk.

"Look out! there she comes now;" and Ainslee, looking back, saw a rather tall lady walking briskly over the narrow path. She just nodded her head as she went by, and gave Ainslee a look through her gold-bowed spectacles, as much as to say, "So you're the new boy!"

"She's got glasses on," said Ainslee. "She's awful old, isn't she?"

"Not so very," answered Tom. "She ain't as old as my father, quite, he says. He used to go to school with her, and she's always wore glasses, and she's thirty-one years old."

"My!" said Ainslee, who thought how queerly she must have looked when she was a baby, in a long white dress, and those spectacles on her nose; but by this time they were at the school-house door, and he made no more remarks just then.

The school-house stood on a hill, as school-houses in New England almost always do. There was first a little bit of a room, where the children hung their things, and left their dinner-baskets, and where the water pail stood; then came the school-room, low and square, the desks rising gradually to the back, where the larger children sat — boys on one side and girls on the other. In front were two low benches for the very youngest, put right before the teacher's desk, so that she could watch them every minute, and here Ainslee was told to take his place. Sinny and one other little boy sat on the same bench, and on the other side were two little girls, whom Ainslee began to look at immediately.

Miss Barrett asked his name, and wrote it in a book, after which she called the roll. Ainslee said "Present!" with all the rest, and felt very fine that at last he was really at school. Then he listened to hear what names the little girls would answer to. The one he thought he should like the best, turned out to be Amanda Martin; and the one next to her, Maria Jones; and the small boy sitting by him was Sampson Simmons.

Miss Barrett read a chapter in the Bible, and then rapping sharply on the desk, called, "First class in reading, take their places."

Seven or eight of the larger boys and girls came forward, and Ainslee watched them curiously as they toed the mark, and put one hand behind them, keeping it there all the time, except when a leaf was to be turned over. After the reading had ended, they spelled some of the harder words, and both hands were put behind them then. How they did behave, too! One pair in particular, belonging to a little boy with very red, curly hair, were not still a minute, but poked one neighbor, and pinched another, and at last pretended to be slapping the Reader which was held in them, till Ainslee could not bear it, and laughed aloud.

"Who did that?" said Miss Barrett, taking up her ruler.

"Me, ma'am," said Ainslee, with a red face.

"What for?"

"'Cause I couldn't help it, ma'am."

"One bad mark to begin with, sir," said Miss Barrett. "If you get another, you'll have to stay in at recess."

Ainslee sobered at once, and looked down at his Spelling-book, but a new class being called, he looked up again to watch that, and altogether was so interested, that the hour-and-a-half to recess seemed very short. Tom Martin taught him how to steer his sled, and took him down behind him once, and Ainslee made up his mind to ask his mother for one just as soon as he got home.

After recess Miss Barrett called him up to her desk.

"You will have to read and spell by yourself," she said, "until you catch up with Sampson and Sinny. How far are you in the Reader?"

"Nowhere, ma'am," said Ainslee. "I've looked at all the pictures, though."

"Can't you read a word?" asked Miss Barrett, looking quite disgusted. "Such a great boy as you are!"

"Papa didn't want me to know how," said Ainslee, "so I didn't ever learn. I will now, though."

"Well, I should think it was time," said Miss Barrett. "Now, what is that?" and she turned to the alphabet, and began to point out the different letters with a pin. After he had said them all, she showed him how to learn a little spelling lesson, and told him to sit down and be good till she was ready for him again. Noon came before his next lesson time, and Ainslee, with the rest, gathered about the stove till the dinners were eaten, and then went out again to the hill, where, before the bell called them in, he had learned to get to the bottom, without tumbling off his sled more than twice.

One class after another was called, and Ainslee, growing tired of studying, turned to Sinny who was chewing something, —

"What you doing?" he whispered.

"Makin' a spit-ball; look a here," said Sinny; and rolling the wet paper into a little round ball, he watched till Miss Barrett's head was turned, and threw it at one of the boys in the class before them, who happened to be so busy saying a table, that he did not notice it.

"Where'd you get the paper?" said Ainslee, charmed with the experiment. Sinny showed him a torn leaf in his Spelling-book, which must have already supplied a good many.

Ainslee tore off a bit, and soon had just

such another little ball in his own fingers. He wouldn't hit anybody, he thought; he'd just throw it at the teacher's desk; and as Miss Barrett turned away again, he snapped it hard with his thumb and finger, as he often had beans and pease. Too hard, for the head came round again in a second, and the spit-ball was lodged on the left glass of those very gold spectacles.

There was a dreadful silence.

"Come here, you very bad boy," said Miss Barrett, taking off her spectacles and rubbing them with her handkerchief. "So this is the way you behave the very first day. Don't you know any better?"

"No, ma'am," said Ainslee. "I didn't know it was bad; I only thought *maybe* it was. I wasn't goin' to hit your eye."

"I'll give you something to make you know for certain," said Miss Barrett, and putting a high stool on one side of her platform, she lifted him to it.

Poor Ainslee! How he felt as all the scholars stared at him. He stood quietly though, till he saw Sampson Simmons make a face at him, behind his Spelling-book, and then burst into tears.

"I want to get down and go home," he cried. "I don't love to go to school."

"You never will love to when you're a bad

boy," said Miss Barrett. "You've got to say your lesson now, so don't you cry any more."

Ainslee could not say his lesson then, and went on crying so hard, that at last Miss Barrett told him to run home, and be a better boy to-morrow.

Mamma was surprised at his red eyes, and more so at his forlorn story, and Ainslee felt much better when he had told her everything.

"I don't think you really meant to do wrong," she said, when he ended, "but you will know to-morrow that playing and throwing spit-balls are not right things to do. After this, you shall only go half a day; you will be better able to sit still and be quiet, if you are not in school so long."

Ainslee managed to be a very good boy the next day. Sitting still grew easier and easier, and he went on very well, till after a fortnight or so of school, when something happened, of which I shall tell you in another chapter.

XII.

AINSLEE'S VALENTINE.

Ainslee's seat in school was, as I have told you, on a little bench in front of the teacher's desk, where she could see all that he did, and the two little girls were close by, only a narrow passage-way between them. Sampson Simmons had the end toward the girls' side, and could almost touch Amanda Martin by leaning over. He did not like her, however, because she made fun of his big head, and was always getting above him in the spelling class, and so Miss Barrett never had to scold him for whispering to her. Ainslee, on the contrary, thought her more delightful than any little girl he had ever seen, and wished that he might sit in Sampson's place, and look at her all the time when he was not studying. So one morning, getting there before him, Ainslee sat down on Sampson's end of the bench, and pulled his own and Sinny's books toward him.

"Get out o' that," said Sampson, who came in just as Ainslee had settled things to his mind.

"I don't want to," said Ainslee. "You let

me and Sinny sit this end, and you sit where Sinny used to."

"I won't no such a thing," snapped Sampson. "You just want to sit there so's to fire spit-balls up to the big boys' end. You go back to your own place this minute, or I'll tell Miss Barrett what an awful face you made at her yesterday."

Ainslee slid back to the middle, and took up his Spelling-book, very much as if he would like to throw it at Sampson. Miss Barrett had just opened the roll-book, and rapped on the desk, and so he had to keep still for an hour-and-a-half, thinking so hard all the time how he could coax him, that his ten words of spelling lesson were almost forgotten.

Sampson whisked out at recess, and Ainslee followed slowly, hardly listening to Sinny, who went on talking just the same, whether anybody paid any attention or not. Amanda had run to the top of the hill, and was begging her brother Tom to let her have his sled and go down all alone.

"You can have mine one time," said Ainslee, "and I'll go down with Sinny," and he put the rope in her hand. Ainslee's sled was the very handsomest one in school: bright blue, with a white and gold border, and *Defiance* on it in gilded letters. All the boys had had a ride on

it, for Ainslee was very obliging, as well as very proud of the new sled, and each boy declared it to be the best sled that ever was made. Amanda was delighted at having it all to herself, and smiled so at Ainslee, that he thought her prettier than ever.

Sampson, who had no sled, was trying to coast down on a piece of board, which went very well over one or two icy places, but stuck fast as soon as it came to snow. Ainslee watched a moment, and then a bright idea came.

"I say, Samp, come here!" he shouted. "No, Sinny; you go down with anybody you're a mind to. I want to talk to Samp."

Sampson picked himself up, and walked forward as if half a mind not to do it.

"Look a here, Samp," said Ainslee; "you change seats with me and I'll let you slide on my sled two times this recess."

"That ain't enough," said Sampson, after thinking a moment. "Two times now, and four this noon, and then I'll do it."

"Why, that's an awful lot," said Ainslee. "You might do it for four times."

"No I won't then," answered Sampson, who thought there must be something very desirable about his end of the bench, which he had never found out, and who meant to drive a good bargain for it.

"Well," said Ainslee, slowly, "I'll give you the six times, but you mustn't ever ask for the seat back again."

"All right," said Sampson, dashing down the hill after the sled, and taking it with such a jerk, that little Amanda was almost upset, and had to catch hold of Billy Howard, who was walking up by her.

Ainslee went down on Sinny's sled, which, being only a rough wooden one his grandfather had made for him, went bumpity bump all the way, and turned right off into a drift just before they got to the bottom. Ainslee dropped some snow down Sinny's back to pay him for not steering better, and Sinny, after dancing round a minute, flew at Ainslee and washed his face to pay *him*, and just then the bell rang, and there was no more time for coasting or squabbling.

Ainslee took his new place, looking so delighted that Sampson determined to watch and find out what he could mean to do. He sat stiller than usual, however; and Sampson, after spying around Sinny till Miss Barrett looked up, and told him if he didn't keep his head where it belonged, he should be kept in at noon, gave it up, and turned to his Multiplication Table.

Sinny liked being in the middle, for now he could tease two instead of one. So while he

held his head down carefully, and studied in a very loud whisper, he poked one elbow into Ainslee, and another into Sampson, who thought at first that he would hold up his hand and tell Miss Barrett, and then, that he would poke back, and have some fun too. Miss Barrett looked down at the bench just then, but both boys seemed to be studying much harder than usual, and she turned again to the copy-books. Sinny, pretty sure now that she would not look for some time, forgot to keep his head down, and engaged in such a series of sly nips and digs, that both boys giggled outright before they thought.

"Sampson Simmons, come right here and stand by me," said Miss Barrett, severely; "and Sinny Smith, you go into the passage-way, and stay till I call you."

Sinny skipped out in such a way that she called him back, and made him do it over again properly, and then settled once more to the copy-books.

In the mean time, Ainslee had moved further and further, till now he was on the very end of the bench, staring at Amanda, and wishing with all his might that he had a sister like her.

"She's so nice," he thought; "nicer than any little girl I know anywhere, unless, maybe, cousin Lizzie. I wish I sat on the same bench with her."

Amanda was chewing a piece of spruce gum, doing it very quietly, for fear Miss Barrett would see, and take it away, and this fear made her eyes shine, and her cheeks as red as could be. One hand was resting on the end of the bench, and Ainslee reached over and patted it. Amanda took it away a moment, but let it fall back again, and Ainslee gave it another pat, and then hugged hard as much of the fat arm as he could reach.

"Well, Ainslee Barton," said Miss Barrett's sharp voice; and Ainslee, starting back, saw that she had laid down her pen, and was leaning back in her chair, from which she must have been watching him two or three minutes.

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself," she went on, "playing with girls? Come right here, sir."

Ainslee walked up to her with a very red face.

"Take that stool and put it on the end of the platform," she said; and Ainslee dragged along the same high, yellow stool, on which he had stood two or three weeks before, and Miss Barrett lifted him on to it.

"Now, Amanda Martin, you come here too," she said.

All the school were looking by this time, wondering what was to be done. Miss Barrett lifted her to the same stool, and put her back to back with Ainslee.

"You're so fond of each other," she said, "it's a pity you shouldn't be close together," and from her desk she took some strings, with which she tied their feet together under the seat. The stool was narrow, and Ainslee sat very still for fear that he should joggle Amanda off. He knew all the boys in school so well now that he hardly minded sitting up there before them, and as he felt, too, that Miss Barrett was very cross and disagreeable, and had no business to put him there, just for hugging a nice little girl, he held his head up, and did not cry at all.

Poor Amanda did not stop to think whether Miss Barrett was right or not, but just cried with all her might for a little while, till her brother Tommy held up a peppermint-drop where she could see it. She felt better then, and remembering that the spruce gum was still in her mouth, took it out and pinched it into a pig, chewing it soft again whenever it hardened, and at last dividing it into two pieces, one of which she slipped into Ainslee's hand.

After all the two children did not so much mind their punishment, and at twelve o'clock, when Miss Barrett untied them, she wondered to find them so contented. Their feet were pretty stiff, to be sure, but on the whole they had grown quite intimate since recess, and Ainslee, instead

of being made ashamed of being with her, liked Amanda better than ever. Sampson caught up Ainslee's sled as they all ran out.

"Ho!" said he, "wouldn't I be ashamed to have to sit up that way with a girl!"

"I'd rather sit so with a girl than with you, so now," said Ainslee. "I won't ever sit by you again."

"Yes you will," said Sampson. "I'm going to take my own seat to-morrow morning."

"Then you've told a lie," said Ainslee. "You said 'all right' when I told you you mustn't ask for it again."

"Well, I meant all right for this morning," answered Sampson, preparing to get on the sled.

"Then you sha'n't have my sled," said Ainslee, running up to him. "You've cheated; give it back."

"I haven't," said Sampson. "You said I was to have six rides, if you had the seat, and I haven't had but two."

"Oh, come now," said Sinny. "You know well enough you didn't mean only to-day."

"It's none o' your business, any way," said Sampson, suddenly turning upon him. "You ain't anything but a nigger, — a dirty little nigger, — that hasn't any business to come to school."

"Now you Samp, stop that," said Tommy

Martin coming up. "He's a nicer boy than you be."

"I'm going to punch you, Sampson," said Ainslee, whose cheeks had been getting redder and redder. "You do mean things every minute, and I'm going to punch you;" and before Sampson had made up his mind what to do, Ainslee had sprung upon him, and both were down in the snow.

"Hands off!" said Tommy, as Sinny would have gone into the battle. "Two to one ain't fair. Let 'em settle the best way they can."

This was likely to be a hard one for Ainslee. Sampson was older and stronger than he, and after the first moment of surprise was over, fought furiously, getting him face down at last in the snow, and hitting him till he was pulled away by Tommy.

"Better luck next time," he said. "You'll lick him yet, Ainslee."

Ainslee took his sled and ran toward home, trying not to cry, while Sampson, who had shouted, "Let that alone," and started after him, was held back by Tommy.

"You ain't going to have everything you want — so!" said he. "I'll lick you myself if you touch Ainslee Barton, if I am bigger than you be."

By the time Ainslee reached home, he had made up his mind that, if he were beaten twenty times over, he would get the best of Sampson Simmons some day, and he sat down to dinner with a very grave face.

Grandpa gave him a slice of roast beef and a great potato, when his turn came, and then rather waited for the potato to be mashed and come back to him again for gravy; for Ainslee, like almost all little boys, thought potato and gravy nearly the best part of dinner. But Ainslee touched neither that nor his squash, of which he was very fond, only cut away at his beef, till every bit was gone, and then passed up his plate for more.

"More?" said grandpa. "Clear meat isn't good for little boys. Why don't you eat your vegetables?"

"Don't want 'em," said Ainslee. "Didn't you say this morning, when you was cutting the steak, that beef made people strong, grandpa?"

"Yes," said grandpa; "but what do you want to get any stronger for?"

"Because I've got something to do," said Ainslee. "Please to give me a large, thick piece, grandpa."

"Eat the potato, dear," said mamma, as the thick piece came back. "What is it you've got to do?"

"Lick Sampson Simmons," said Ainslee, in a loud voice. "I'll punch his eyes all black, when I've eaten beef enough."

"Why, why! why, why!" said grandpa, laying down his knife and fork. "Who's this talking so large about punching? What has Sampson done?"

Ainslee told his story, and grandpa, who had listened with a queer little twinkle in his eyes all the way through, said not a word, but went on with the dinner.

"Now, Richard," said grandma, "don't you mean to tell him he mustn't."

"Well, no," said grandpa. "I think Ainslee knows pretty well what is right, and I'm inclined to believe Sampson needs punching, from what I hear about him."

What grandma might have said here, I don't know, but as Ainslee had finished his beef, and would have no pie, mamma took his hand and led him up to her room.

"Now, tell me about it again," she said. "Tell me just as if you were Tommy Martin, and saw exactly what Sampson Simmons and Ainslee Barton did."

Ainslee sat very still, frowning, and trying to make himself feel like somebody else, and at last began again.

"Now, mamma, isn't he awful mean?" he said, when he had ended, "and can't I punch him bymbye?"

"Wait and see," said mamma. "He may be sorry he has been mean, and if he is, there will be no need of punching him. Like Amanda, too, as much as you please, but don't hug her in school, for the teacher doesn't like you to do anything that keeps you from learning your lessons; and if you play, and make Amanda play too, there are two wrongs instead of one."

"Was it wrong for me to love her?" said Ainslee.

"No," mamma answered, "it is never wrong to love, but it is sometimes to do it in the wrong place. You wouldn't get up in church to hug me?"

"Yes I would," said Ainslee. "I wanted to last Sunday."

"Why didn't you?" said mamma.

"'Cause everybody would have stopped looking at the minister, and looked at me," said Ainslee.

Mamma laughed. "Well, just so it is about school. Suppose while you were hugging Amanda, that Sampson had wanted to hug Sarah Jones, and Tommy Martin, Juliana Johnson, and so on, when would the lessons have been learned?

While you are in school, you must mind Miss Barrett's rules carefully. Out of school, you can do what you please, so long as it is right."

Next morning Ainslee went to school, determined that Sampson should not take his sled, but found his place empty, and at recess Billy Howard said he was sick with a sore throat. Ainslee took his seat of course, and whether anything was said or done about it when Sampson came back, I shall tell you at some other time. In the mean time Amanda had many a ride on his sled, and Ainslee began to wish again that he stayed all day, and even asked his mother if he might, to which she said a very decided "No."

It was February now, and in the book-store, and the candy and cigar shops, there were gay valentines, costing anything from a cent to a dollar or two, which the school children admired every day. There were sheets of paper with wreaths or hearts in which to write anything you might think of yourself. Stephen Jones, the oldest boy in school, had one of these in his desk, and two or three sheets of common paper beside, on which he was writing a verse of poetry over and over, till he could do it well enough to copy on the valentine. He showed it to Ainslee one day, who wished that he could write, and wondered if there would be time for him to learn be-

fore St. Valentine's Day. He could print all the letters of the alphabet, big and little, for he had been doing this on his slate, half an hour or so, every day since he began school. He had never made them into words, but now he tried quite hard to copy short sentences from his Spelling-book, and began to think to himself that he might perhaps be able to print something which would do for a valentine.

All this time he had asked nobody's advice, but one afternoon, sitting on a log near the wood-pile, with Sinny, he said suddenly, —

"Did you ever have a valentine, Sinny?"

"No," said Sinny. "Mother did, though. She's got one at home in the big Bible, and she won't let me look at it, only once in a great while. She says father sent it to her when he was courtin' her."

"I wish I could see it," said Ainslee.

"Well, you can, said Sinny. "You come up to grandfather's, an' mother'll show it to you, I know."

So Ainslee ran in and asked his mother, who said "Yes," and the two children went up to old Peter Smith's, taking turns in drawing each other on the sled.

It was a queer, little, old house, in which they lived. Ainslee's visits there had generally been

made in the barn, ending with eating gingerbread on the door-step, and so he looked about now with some curiosity. Sinny had taken him into the room, where Nancy, his mother, spent almost all her time. There was a best room, but it was almost never opened, unless some one died. This one, which was parlor, and dining-room, and kitchen, all in one, had a great fire-place, with a bright fire burning in it, and before it a tin baker in which Nancy was baking biscuit for supper. In one corner stood a bed, never slept in unless company came, for their own rooms were up-stairs. It was made up so high with feather beds, that one needed to climb into a chair in order to reach it, and this bed was covered with a remarkable patch-work quilt, made in basket pattern. There were half a dozen chairs in the room; one a very straight-backed rocking-chair by the window, where Nancy sat to do her sewing. A little stand was near it, which held her work-basket, and on another stand in the corner was the big Bible, and the almanac, which old Peter read in the evening.

"I want some more chips," Nancy said, as they came in. "Sinny, you and Ainslee go into the wood-house and pick up a basketful, an' I'll give you some biscuit when you come in."

"Show us the valentine, mother, when we're through," Sinny said. "Ainslee wants to see it."

"Maybe," said Nancy, and the boys, when they came in, found her sitting by the window, the big Bible in her lap.

"Where I lived, they give me this Bible when I was married," she said; "an' parson Tuttle, he wrote Simeon's name and mine right there, an' the date an' all; an' when Sinny was born, he put it down on the other page. Here's the valentine in among the Deaths."

Ainslee watched as she drew the sheet of paper from the great envelope and unfolded it. There were a pair of doves billing at the top of the page, and little red hearts with arrows stuck through them, a wreath of flowers, in the centre of which was written in a cramped handwriting, blotted here and there, four lines, signed,

"Your trew Valentin til Deth."

"What does it say?" asked Ainslee. "Read it, won't you?" and Sinny's mother read, —

> "The Rose is Red,
> The Voylet is Blu,
> The Pink is swete, and
> so Are You."

"That's the nicest thing to say in a valentine, I ever did hear," said Ainslee, as Mrs. Smith put the yellow paper back into the envelope, and shut up the Bible with a sigh. "I say, Nancy, I want to send a valentine, and write it all myself, and I'll say that same thing."

"Well, if I ever!" said Nancy. "You ain't six years old yet."

"I don't care," said Ainslee. "I've got five cents to buy some paper. You tell me that over again till I know it. No, you write it. No, you needn't either. Mamma'll let me come up here to-morrow and write it myself. May I?"

"Why, yes," said Nancy, and Ainslee ran home to supper. Going to bed that night he told his mother, who said he might spend his five cents in a pretty envelope and sheet of paper, and she would put them in another one directed to Amanda for him.

"I want to write on the inside one myself, mamma," he said, "so's to have the valentine part all mine."

"Very well," mamma said, and Ainslee went to sleep, perfectly happy.

Next day, right after school, he went down to the village, and after a great deal of difficulty, found some paper just to his mind, with which he trotted back to Nancy's, who had a seat already for him at the table, and sat down with the valentine in her hand, ready to read it to him. Ainslee had a pencil which his mother had sharpened for him, for he could not yet use ink without getting it all over his fingers. Nancy spelled each word for him, just as it was written there,

and Ainslee put it all into the very best printing he could do. On the opposite page you will see exactly how it looked when finished.

Then Ainslee took the envelope, and printed on the outside, just as Nancy told him to spell it — MISAMANDERMARTIN, — all in one word. You ten or twelve-year-olders, who never miss a word in your spelling-classes, can afford to laugh at Ainslee, and your little brothers and sisters will not know but that it is all right, unless you tell them.

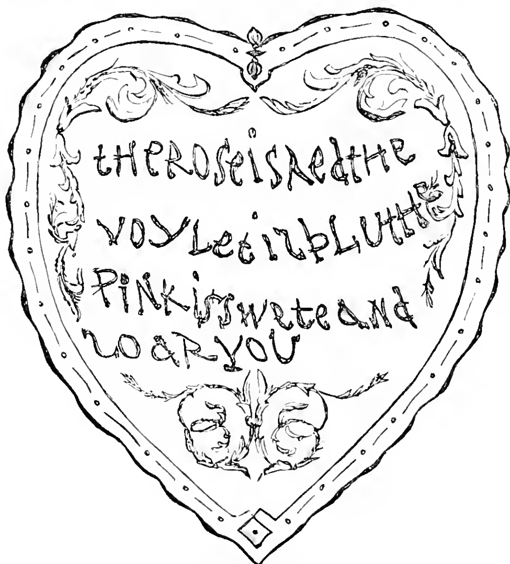
What grandpa, and grandma, and mamma thought when they saw it, I don't know. Grandpa coughed so that he couldn't tell Ainslee how he liked it, and mamma looked out of the window for some time before she put it in the envelope she had all ready. She put on a two-cent stamp, and Mr. Culligan mailed it that evening when he went down to the post-office, together with a penny one that Ainslee had bought for Ann, for it was then the thirteenth of February.

Next day came a terrible storm of wind and rain, and as Ainslee had a little cold, mamma kept him at home. Two valentines came to him, both printed ones, and Ainslee wondered all day, not only whom his could be from, but whether or no Amanda had hers.

The next day was pleasant, and he started for

"Nancy spelled each word for him, just as it was written there, and Ans-*ke* put it all into the very best printing he could do." See page 186.

school just as soon after breakfast as he could get ready, with his two valentines in his pocket.



All the boys and girls were about the stove when he got there, and almost every one had a valentine to show. Sampson Simmons had one of a boy putting his fingers in his mother's preserve jars, which he had found on his seat, and would not have shown had he known what was in it. Amanda Martin was standing by Tommy, holding one, which Ainslee knew in a minute ;

and Sinny was showing his, as if it were the finest one ever printed.

"You didn't get one, did you, Amanda?" asked Ainslee.

"I guess I did," said Amanda. "Tommy makes fun of it, but I think it's beautiful."

"Do you, truly, surely?" said Ainslee.

"Why yes," Amanda answered, looking up. "I'm always going to keep it. Did you send it, Ainslee? I sent you one."

"Which one?" said Ainslee, delighted, and more so, when it proved to be the prettiest one.

"I'll let you ride on my sled like anything, Amanda," he said. "I love you."

"So do I you," said Amanda. "You're the nicest boy I ever saw."

I think Ainslee would have hugged her again that very minute, had not the bell called school to order. He did pat her as he went by, and when he went home at noon, told his mother he wanted to hurry and get big, and just as soon as he did, he should marry Amanda, to which mamma said,—

"Twenty years or so from now, my boy, we will begin to talk about that."

XIII.

SNOW-DRIFTS.

SUCH a snow-storm came, the very last day of February, as Ainslee never had seen, and which the village paper said was "One of the severest in the memory of the oldest inhabitant." White and still the flakes fell for two whole days, and when on the third the sun peeped out just a moment, to see how the world had been getting on without him, he found such a surprising state of things, that he went behind a cloud as fast as he could, and waited till nearly noon before he decided to come out and stay.

In the village where people were going back and forth all the time, the deep snow had been cleared away, and the paths trodden down a little; but further out, where grandpa lived, was one great, white sheet, every fence covered, and no sound to break the wonderful silence.

Ainslee climbed into grandpa's arm-chair, and looked from the dining-room window, as the sun at last gleamed out. The keen north wind, which had howled down the chimneys, and moaned and

groaned all the night long in the old trees, had whirled the snow into deeper and deeper drifts with each gust, till now it seemed as if nobody ever could dig out. The old rooster crowed hoarsely from the barn, shut in by a mountain of snow before the door. The two pigs squealed with hunger, for Mr. Culligan had not been able to get up to them from the meadow where he lived, since the afternoon before. The pine-trees near the summer-house were great white pyramids, and Ainslee looked down through them to the meadow.

"There comes Mr. Cully, grandpa," he shouted.

Mamma came to the window and looked out with him at Culligan, laboring through the snow, sinking sometimes up to his waist, and reaching the backdoor at last, all out of breath, and with the reddest face that ever you saw. Ann gave him some hot coffee at once, and presently, when he had rested, grandpa and he began digging a path to the wood-house and barn. Ainslee, wrapped to his eyes, plunged about in the snow, which was far above his head; and at last got the fire-shovel, and began to dig a tunnel which he thought might, in time, bring him out somewhere near Sinny's. As for getting to school, that was quite out of the question, until the oxen and snow-sleds should make a way.

"'Well,' said grandpa, 'at the rate you are going on, you may get there in a year and a half from now.'" — See page 191.

"I'd learned down to 'twice five makes ten,'" mamma," said Ainslee, "and now I shall forget every word of it. Maybe I can't go to school all the rest of the winter, and then I won't remember anything."

"Won't you?" said mamma, smiling. "Then every morning you may say a little lesson to me, till you go again."

"Oh no!" said Ainslee; and thinking this a subject which had better not to be talked about any longer, returned to his tunnel.

"How long would it take me to dig up to Sinny's, grandpa?" he asked, as he began again.

"Well," said grandpa, putting his head on one side, and examining the hole, which was now just large enough to allow of Ainslee's standing upright in it, "at the rate you are going on, you may get there in a year and a half from now."

"Ho!" said Ainslee. "You always make fun of me, grandpa. I'm going to make prints o' myself all over, and not dig any more when you're a-looking."

"I sha'n't look; I'm too busy," said grandpa. "Dig away;" but Ainslee was off to a spot near the wood-house, from which the snow had been blown, till only a foot or so deep remained, and which was just moist enough to make an excel-

lent likeness of him, boots and all, as he lay on his back with both arms stretched out.

"I wonder if I could make nose and eyes and all, if I laid my face down," he thought; but it was so cold and choky when he tried it, that he gave up it at last, and went into the house to get warm. Ann had a doughnut man cut out, and dropped him into the frying-pan, just after Ainslee came in, who watched him swell, and turn a lovely brown.

"Wouldn't he holler if he was alive," he said. "Ann, I've just thought. I'm going to eat him every speck, and then I'm going out again to make a snow-man."

"You're too small," said Ann. "You couldn't, no more than the baby."

"I could too," said Ainslee. "You see now," and too full of this plan to eat more than half his man, he started out, and began rolling up a ball, which very soon grew so large, that even if he had not been stopped by a drift, he could not have stirred it another inch.

"The snow's too deep," said Ainslee. "I guess I'll go to the barn and perhaps I'll find some eggs."

Grandpa had not got there yet, however, and Ainslee, after walking back and forth for some time, between the high walls of snow piled up

on either side, grew tired, and went into the house. Baby was awake, and Ainslee played with his blocks, and built him some card-houses. Tea-time came before he knew it, and bed-time very soon after.

If Ainslee had stayed awake that night, he would have heard the rain pouring down steadily, and when he opened his eyes next morning, the drifts were running down hill, and a cold wind blowing the rain against the windows.

"Pretty good beginning for March," grandpa said at the breakfast table. "If this goes on, the snow will be gone in no time. The path to school is all clear, Ainslee, I guess."

"You wouldn't want me to get a sore throat, would you, grandpa?" said Ainslee, "a-going all in the rain?"

"Castor-oil would cure it," said grandpa; "and if you went without your dinner and supper, you'd be well the next morning, and could do it all over again."

Ainslee was too busy with buckwheat cakes just then to make any answer, and indeed I don't think grandpa expected any, for he walked out to see Mr. Culligan, who was in the kitchen.

All day the rain poured down. Ainslee pasted some pictures into a scrap-book, in the morning; and in the afternoon mamma put a large closet in

her room in order, and he looked at the different things as they were brought out.

"What can this be?" said mamma, reaching up to the top shelf, and talking down a red and green something.

"Why, it's a beautiful teenty barrel," said Ainslee. "Let me have it, mamma. Where did you get it?"

"Uncle Ainslee gave it to me long ago," mamma said, "when I was a young girl. He brought it from Russia, I think, and it was full of little bottles of perfumes, packed in cotton. See, the bung takes out, and there is a hole large enough to put your hand in."

"Give it to me, mamma,"said Ainslee. "Do give it to me for all my own."

"Well," said mamma, "if you will take very good care of it, I will; but if I find you are going to spoil it, I shall take it away."

"I won't spoil it, certain sure," said Ainslee, and ran down to show it to grandma and Ann. His wagon stood in the kitchen, and Ainslee filled the barrel with water, and pretended he was a root-beer man, and sold glasses of it for two pins apiece.

"What are you going to do with so many pins, Ainslee?" said grandma. "You must have a boxful now."

"I'm going to make scissors of 'em," said Ainslee, "next summer, along with the boys. Cross 'em, you know, and put 'em on the track, and when the locomotive comes along, it jams 'em into splendid scissors. Tommy Martin's got lots."

"You'll get killed going on the track," said grandma.

"No I won't," Ainslee answered. "The boys don't go on the track, only put the pins on. You know Seth Collins, grandma? His father keeps the candy store, and he brings pea-nuts to school, a whole pocketful sometimes, and he sells 'em, three for two pins. I bought a lot the other day."

Grandma shook her head a little, but gave him two or three pins, and drank the water from the little tin cup as though it were the most delicious root-beer. Ainslee played with his barrel till bed-time, and when next morning came, wanted very much to take it to school, and went off just the least bit angry that mamma would not let him. He forgot barrel and everything else in a very few minutes, for there was Amanda walking right on before him, with the very dearest little pair of rubber boots on her small legs that ever were seen. Ainslee ran after her, and hugged her right in the middle of the road, he was so glad to see her again. Tommy laughed a little, and said, if Ainslee lived with Amanda all the

time, he guessed he wouldn't like her quite so much.

"She's a pretty nice little gal, though," Tommy added, as he saw her face cloud a little, and Ainslee said, —

"There isn't any nicer anywhere."

Two or three of the boys came up, and they all went into the school-room in the highest spirits. Sinny was delighted to see Ainslee, and the frolic which began by the stove did not end at roll-call, but went on in such fashion, that at last Sinny giggled, and, trying to turn the giggle into a cough, made such a splutter behind his Spelling-book, that Miss Barrett said, —

"Go into the entry this minute, sir, and stay till you're called."

Sinny went out slowly, for the entry was cold, and he did not like to stand there. He counted all the boys' caps, and all the girls' hoods, and then, finding Miss Barrett was hearing a class, and not likely to call him in for some time, opened his dinner-pail, and ate a part of his gingerbread.

"That's Sampson's," he said to himself, looking at a little red and brown basket in one corner; "I'm going to see what he's got."

Sinny lifted the lid and looked in. Only bread and butter on top, but pulling up one slice a little,

there underneath was a fried pie, delightfully brown, and just what he liked, better than almost anything else. Sinny tiptoed back to his own pail, and looked in again at the two apples there. They were Pearmains; a rich, dark-red, and so good, that often the boys traded off at noon, and gave Sinny cake or pie for one of them. Sampson had wanted to do this not long before, for these apples were the only ones of the kind which were brought to school, and as Sinny stood thinking of the fried pie, he remembered this.

"Fried pie's too good for Samp," he said. "I'll give him both my apples, and then it'll be fair enough to eat up his pie."

So Sinny took out the pie, put the two apples carefully under the bread and butter, and then stood up behind Juliana Johnson's plaid shawl, and ate till the very last crumb was gone. Miss Barrett called him just as he finished, and he walked into the school-room, and said his spelling-lesson, and then came recess, and for the first time he began to think, "What'll Samp say?"

Sampson went right out to play, however, but when recess was over, Sinny grew more and more frightened, as he thought what might happen at noon, — too frightened to make any plans as to what it was best to do. Miss Barrett went

home at once when the twelve o'clock bell rang, and all the children gathered about the stove with their dinners. Ainslee stopped to eat his luncheon with the rest, and Sinny stood between him and Tommy Martin, thinking that the safest place to be in.

"Holloa, Sinny!" said Ainslee, suddenly, as Sampson took out his bread and butter, and stood staring at the apples. "Samp Simmons stole your apples. Take 'em away from him."

"No such a thing," said Sampson, indignantly. "Somebody's been an' stole my pie. I had a whole pie. You did it, Sinny Smith, coz these is your apples."

"I didn't steal it neither," said Sinny, taking a step forward. "I only swapped. I eat up your pie. an' them's my apples to pay for it; so now."

"You see what Miss Barrett will do to you," said Sampson, wagging his head. "If I don't just tell her the very minute she comes back."

"Don't you now, Samp," said Ainslee, who looked troubled and anxious. "He didn't mean to steal."

"You shet up," said Sampson, who rather enjoyed the idea of getting any one of Ainslee's friends into trouble. "'Tain't your muss, it's mine."

"I'll give you two cookies if you won't tell," said Ainslee.

"What kind?" asked Sampson, who liked good things.

"Sugar," said Ainslee. "Be-*yu*-tiful ones: the best kind grandma makes."

"Hain't you got but two?" said Sampson.

"Three," Ainslee answered; but I was goin' to eat one myself."

"Give 'em all or I'll tell," said Sampson; and Ainslee, after hesitating a moment, handed over the three, which Sampson gobbled down, as if he were afraid they would be taken from him.

"Here's the rest o' my gingerbread, Ainslee," said Sinny. "I ate it most all up when I was out in the entry, but you can have all there is."

"Well," said Ainslee, "I guess I'll take it, 'cause I'm going to stay till afternoon recess, and grandpa's going to stop for me, and take me somewhere in the wagon."

"Samp took that pretty easy," said Tommy Martin, as Sampson, after finishing the last speck of bread and butter, went out. "I thought he'd pitch into you, Sinny. Don't you swop off again, or maybe I'll punch you myself. 'Tain't fair to be snoopin' round, lookin' to see what we've got. It's most as bad as real stealing."

"I wouldn't, to anybody but Samp," said

Sinny, munching away on his bread and butter. "He's so hateful I don't care, only I didn't want him to tell. It wasn't stealing, one bit. Two apples is bigger than his pie."

"That's so," said Tommy; "but don't you do it again, for all that."

"Come out now," Ainslee said; "it's most time for school to go in again," and all the children ran out for a play.

Sampson walked in when the bell rang, as though he had something on his mind. One of the school-committee had come in with Miss Barrett, and after the roll had been called, he told the children that he should ask them some questions in geography. So Miss Barrett called up the Geography class, and after that had been examined, Mr. Brown, for that was the committee-man's name, put out some words for the younger children to spell. Sinny did better than any other boy of his size, and Sampson, who had missed twice, felt more and more angry.

Quarter of three, the usual recess-time, came, and Mr. Brown got up to go. Ainslee, who was tired of school now, was listening hard, thinking it full time for grandpa to be there, and wishing Miss Barrett would touch the bell, so that he could run out for his cap and coat, when Sampson held up his hand. Ainslee turned around

to see what he wanted, and Miss Barrett, who had at first paid no attention, seeing that he looked quite important, and still held his hand up, said, —

"What do you want, Sampson?"

"Please ma'am, Sinny Smith's been a-stealing," said Sampson, rising, and speaking in so loud a tone of voice, that every scholar gave the strictest attention at once.

"*What!*" said Miss Barrett, and Mr. Brown sat down again, and looked attentively at Sampson. Sinny started, and then held his head down; Ainslee grew very red, and Tommy Martin shook his fist at Sampson behind the lid of his desk, which fell with a bang.

"Silence!" said Miss Barrett. "What does this mean? What has he stolen?"

"He's stole my pie, and eat it all up," said Sampson, "and Ainslee Barton hired me not to tell."

"When did he do it?" asked Mr. Brown, looking severely at Sinny.

"He laughed right out in school this morning, an' got sent into the entry," Sampson answered, "an' he peeked into all the dinner-pails, and eat some out o' every one o' them, an' he eat a whole pie out o' mine."

"Oh what a awful lie!" Sinny began; and

"O Miss Barrett!" said Tommy Martin, standing up.

"Silence!" said Miss Barrett. "I don't want to hear a word;" and, "Silence!" echoed Mr. Brown. "If you've been stealing, you've got to be whipped. Come here."

"He didn't steal," said Ainslee, stepping forward. "He only changed off. He gave Sampson both his apples, an' I gave three cookies, an' Samp's meaner than anything."

"Don't tell any lies about it, but sit down this minute," said Miss Barrett.

"Didn't you hear your teacher say she didn't want no talk about it?" said Mr. Brown, taking up the ruler. "Simeon Smith, you've been a very bad boy. It's wicked to steal, and you've got to be punished. Hold out your hand."

Sinny held out his hand, but jerked it away as the ruler came down, and drew back a step.

"None o' that now," said Mr. Brown, rubbing his knee, against which the ruler had struck, and poor Sinny's small, black hands, were made to sting a good deal harder than they might have done, had he held still in the first place. Which did the hardest crying, he or Ainslee, it would not be easy to tell; and as Amanda cried because Ainslee did, Mr. Brown wondered what had got into the children. Tommy Martin never cried

when he was feruled, but Sinny was not yet old enough to keep still when hurt, and sat wiping his eyes on his jacket sleeve, and glowering at Sampson for some time after the whipping was over.

"Keep your seat, sir," Miss Barrett said, when he got up at recess time. "Boys that steal can't go out and play," and Sinny sat down and began to cry again.

Sampson, who thought there was a chance of getting into trouble if he went out, hung round the stove, till the bell rang again. If he could have heard what was going on out-of-doors, he would have told Miss Barrett directly, and asked to go home with her; but as the boys had paid no attention to him when they went out, he concluded that by the time school was over, they would very nearly, if not quite, have forgotten what he had done, and so he went back to his lessons, feeling quite comfortable.

Ainslee had rushed to Tommy Martin the moment the school-room door closed behind them.

"That Samp's the wickedest, meanest boy that ever I saw," he cried, with flashing eyes. "He ought to be licked this very minute, and I can't do it anyhow before next year. Tommy, if you'll lick him for me, I'll give you every marble I've got."

"I don't want to lick him," said Tommy, "'cause I'm bigger than he is, but I tell you what I will do. I'll wash his face for him after school, till he hollers, and tell him I'll do it every day if he don't look out."

"Don't do it till to-morrow morning, then," said Ainslee, "'cause I want to help, and there's grandpa coming now. I'll come to school real early, so's to see you."

"Well," said Tommy, and Ainslee climbed up by grandpa, who had just reached them, and the two drove away.

"Miss Barrett ain't fair, grandpa," he said, after a long silence.

"Isn't she?" said grandpa, who had been looking at his very grave little face for some time. "What has Miss Barrett done?"

"She won't listen a minute to anything," said Ainslee. "She whips you before she finds out whether you've really done anything or not," and Ainslee went on with his story of the day's work.

"Well," said grandpa. "It seems Sampson didn't promise not to tell, though it was almost as mean a piece of work as if he had."

Ainslee thought a minute.

"He didn't, did he?" said he. "He only told me two cookies wasn't enough. That's just

the way he did about the sled. I wish I wasn't so short and fat, grandpa, so't I could lick him. I wish I could grow fast."

"You'll be big enough by and by," said, grandpa, "but I am not sure that licking, as you call it, will be the very best thing for Sampson, and perhaps it is just as well that you are no match for him. Be as honest and truthful yourself as you can be, and perhaps he will grow ashamed of being mean, and try to do better."

"No," said Ainslee. "He won't ever be ashamed of anything. I wish you'd punch him, grandpa."

"I'm as much too big as you are too little," said grandpa, laughing. "Mean people are always punished in one way and another, and Sampson will take his turn by and by."

"He'll take a scrubbing to-morrow," said Ainslee. "We're all a-going to wash his face."

Grandpa made no answer, concluding the affair had better take its own course. Ainslee, who thought he had not heard, waited a moment, and then turned to the horses, coaxing grandpa at last into giving up the reins for a few minutes. The excitement of driving made him half forget Sampson, but at bed-time he told his mother, who said, as grandpa had done, that meanness was almost always its own punishment, and

Ainslee must try the harder to be free from it himself.

"Ain't you willing his face should be washed, mamma?" said Ainslee.

"That may do him good," mamma answered, half smiling. "Certainly he was very mean, and a little cold snow in his eyes may help him to see it."

"You're the bestest mamma," said Ainslee, delighted. "You know I wouldn't punch anybody, or wash their faces either, unless they was awful mean — would I, mamma?"

"I think not," said mamma, and went away, looking just a little doubtful as she entered the sitting-room.

"What is it?" grandpa asked.

"I hope Ainslee is not going to be a quarrelsome child," she said. "Has he told you this new difficulty?"

"Yes," said grandpa. "He's all right. He is just like his Uncle Ainslee, and will never stand meanness in any shape. So long as he fights on the right side, and he is tolerably certain always to do that, you need not worry about him in the least. This Sampson evidently needs to be taken in hand, and it is far better for us big people to have as little as possible to do in the settlement of such matters. A child's sense

of justice is strong enough to carry him through safely, and Sampson will be all the better for a good washing."

"Perhaps so," said mamma, and there the subject dropped.

Sampson had sneaked home when school was out, climbing a fence, and going 'cross lots through the snow, but seeing there were no signs of being followed, grew bolder, and by the time next morning came, decided that the boys did not mean to take any notice of the matter, and so walked to school over his usual road. At the foot of the hill, Tommy Martin, Ainslee, and Sinny, were standing, near almost the last of the snow-drifts, but they were not looking at him, and he passed on whistling.

"Here, you Samp!" Tommy Martin suddenly cried out. "Do you know what you're going to get? We ain't going to lick you, for you're not worth the trouble, but we're going to wash your face well."

Sampson prepared to run, but Tommy caught him, and while Ainslee held one leg, and Sinny the other, tight as a vice, scrubbed his face with handful after handful of the wet snow.'

"I'll tell Miss Barrett!" Sampson howled.

"Tell away!" said Tommy. "The more you tell, the more you'll catch it, that's all."

"Here, you young uns, what you doing there?" called out Stephen Jones, who came up at that moment.

"Giving Samp Simmons a scrubbing, to pay for lying and telling tales yesterday," said Tommy, going on with his work.

"I think I'll have something to do with that," said Stephen. "Look a-here, Sampson; you've sneaked round this whole term, telling everything you saw, and some things you didn't, and you've just got to stop it. I'm going to pitch you into that snow-bank now, and maybe when you come out you'll mend your manners."

"Don't, oh don't," screamed Sampson. "I won't ever tell again! Don't let him, Ainslee. I'll let you have my end of the seat all the time, and I'll"—

What else Sampson might have promised nobody knows, for heels over head he went into the drift, floundering out a minute later, to find the coast clear; not a boy to be seen. Whimpering, he shook himself, and then felt in his pockets. His books were scattered around, and his dinner was nowhere.

"My knife's gone, and all my string," groaned Sampson, after a minute's search, and he sat down in the road and cried forlornly.

"What's the matter?" said little Amanda,

who, walking along, had seen him, and thought at first she would run right by as fast as she could, but whose tender little heart melted as she heard him crying.

"Get out," said Sampson. "I've lost my knife and everything, and my dinner's all spilled."

"I'll give you some o' mine," said Amanda.

"Don't want it," said Sampson, eying her.

Amanda walked on, and Sampson picked up his books, finding his knife near one of them, and then followed her.

"What have you been doing, sir?" said Miss Barrett, who walked into the school-room at the same time as he.

"Been in a drift," said Sampson, who caught a meaning look from Tommy.

"Go and warm yourself," said Miss Barrett, "and don't you do such a silly thing again, when you know it's school-time."

Ainslee and Sinny had capital lessons that day, and at noon Tommy Martin was presented with the very best their dinner-baskets contained. Mamma made no comments when she heard of the morning's work; and as for Sampson, I don't think he told his mother one word about it. Whether it made him a better boy in any way, you will find out as the story goes on. Fear is

not the best reason in the world for doing right ; but if Sampson begins to be better, because he is afraid not to be, he may end, by loving to be good for its own sake ; and if he does, neither he nor you will ever be sorry for what happened at the foot of the hill.

XIV.

AMANDA'S PARTY.

Grandma and mamma were in the sitting-room by the window, sewing. A light snow which had fallen the night before, covered the ground, but the morning sun shining brightly down, was doing its best to make way with it. Around the old well, the green heads of the daffodils were peeping out, and that very day a bluebird had fixed upon the spot for a nest in the Harvest apple-tree. Spring was coming, — a New England spring, which nobody would know much about till summer months had filled its place, — so slowly came green leaves and springing grass; and yet mamma thought, as she looked from the window down to the mill-brook, where the willows grew, how much more beautiful it seemed than a country where trees and grass are always green, and the eye tires of the never-changing color.

Ainslee, standing on the school-house steps pulling on his mittens, hardly knew one season from another. Spring for him, meant willow

whistles, kite-flying, and new maple-sugar, three things of which he had known almost nothing till this year; and as he stood there waiting for Tommy and Amanda, who were whispering behind the stove, all he thought was, whether the old knife Uncle Ainslee had given him would cut a good whistle, or if mamma must be asked for a new one.

"Wait," Tommy called to two or three of the children who had started off, and Amanda came from behind the stove, looking quite important.

"What you doing?" said Ainslee, walking into the school-room. "Why don't you come?"

Sinny's woolly head looked in over Ainslee's shoulder, and Billy Howard, whose mother was the village milliner, drew back a little, in order not to be too near him.

"'Mandy's five years old Friday," said Tommy, looking about him, "and mother says she can have a party, an' we want you all to come."

"Hi!" said Sinny, whirling around on one heel. "Won't it be fun?"

"I ain't a-coming if he does," said Billy Howard. "Not a step."

"Oh, he isn't coming," said Tommy. "Mother said he wasn't to come."

Sinny's face fell, and he walked out toward the entry, but stopped as Ainslee said, —

"Then I won't come if he don't."

"Oh yes, you will," said Amanda. "I want you more'n anybody 'most."

"Then Sinny's to come too," Ainslee answered. "Sinny and Tommy is the best boys to play with there is in school."

"We don't go with niggers," said Billy Howward. "And my mother says your mother's a very queer woman to let you be with Sinny Smith all the time; and she guesses you ain't much when you're in New York, or you would n't do it."

"You get your mother to let Sinny come, Amanda," said Ainslee, paying no attention to Billy. "Don't you want him to?"

"No, I don't," said Amanda. "He ain't anything but a little nigger any way. Mother says you're Bobolitioners, and that's the reason you go with 'em all the time."

"I ain't a Bobolitioner," said Ainslee. "Sinny is as good as you are."

"Oh, ain't you 'shamed!" said Amanda. "I won't speak to you again ever. You needn't come to the party if you don't want to. I don't care."

"Oh, come now!" said Tommy. "Don't

you be hateful, Ainslee. All the rest are coming. 'Mandy don't mean anything. Sinny's good to play with here, but ain't fit to come to a party."

Sinny took out a grimy little pocket-handkerchief, which had the Ten Commandments printed on it, and sitting down on his bench, began to cry.

"Don't you cry, Sinny," said Ainslee, turning from Amanda. "I like you better than anybody; let's go home."

Amanda made a face at him, and said, "Who cares?" and Sampson, who had been listening attentively, made ready to turn a somerset, but reflecting that Amanda might not invite him if he did, stopped just in time. Ainslee walked home with a very heavy heart. To quarrel with Amanda was something he had never expected; he scarcely spoke to Sinny, who, in his turn, was very melancholy, and went in at once to his mother, when they came to old Peter Smith's. Ainslee walked on slowly, swinging his dinner-basket, till he reached the backdoor. Ann heard his step, and looked out from the buttery window.

"Come in here," said she. "I've got something for you."

Ainslee ran in to meet Ann, who held in her hand a pie, baked in a small saucer.

"Mince!" she said. "What do you think o' that, Ainslee?"

"Nice," said Ainslee, who had been begging for one some time. "But I guess I'll save it, Ann," and he went toward the stairs leading to mamma's room.

"Your ma ain't there," called Ann. "She's in the kitchen."

"Yes," said mamma's voice, and I'd like you to do something for me too."

"Oh, what smells so good?" said Ainslee, running into the kitchen. "What *is* you making, mamma?"

"Caramels," mamma answered. "And now I wish you would ask Ann for a little tin pan, and go out and fill it with the cleanest snow you can find."

"It's beautiful all over the choppin'-log," said Ainslee. "I could fill lots o' tin pans."

"One will do," said mamma, "and the sooner it is here the better, for this syrup has boiled quite long enough, I think."

Ainslee ran out to the old log, and was back in a minute with a panful.

"You're going to do it like *me*lasses candy, ain't you, mamma?" he said. "You want me to try it, don't you?"

"Oh yes!" said mamma, smiling a little, and

pouring a spoonful over the snow. "How could I know if it were good, unless you tried it?"

Ainslee watched the hot syrup sinking and spreading in the snow, till the edges curled up, and it lay there, a crisp, delightful mouthful.

"You half, an' me half, mamma," he said, "so't we can both tell the very same minute," and he put his half into his mouth just as mamma put hers.

"*M*elasses candy is good," he said, "but calamels is ever so much better. What made you make 'em, mamma?"

"I heard this morning that something was to happen Friday," said mamma, "and I thought you would like to carry Amanda some very nice candy. Now I am going to pour it all into this great buttered pan; we'll set it in the well-house, and in a few minutes you shall see something else."

Ainslee watched mamma till the hot candy had cooled enough to be cut into little squares, and was put safely away in the store-room.

"It's good," he said then; "but you an' grandma can eat it all up. I expose I ain't going to take any to Amanda."

"Why not?" said mamma, astonished; and then seeing from Ainslee's grave face that there was some trouble, added, "Come up-stairs, dear,

and we will talk about it, while I am getting all this stickiness off my hands."

"I ain't a-going to Amanda's party unless Sinny does," said Ainslee, as they reached her room. "She says Sinny's nothing but a little nigger, and ain't fit to come to parties, and I think he's just as nice a boy as Tommy Martin. Billy Howard said I was a Bobolitioner, an' you too. He's most as hateful a boy as Samp Simmons, and I expose I sha'n't like Amanda any more ever," and here Ainslee broke down, and began to cry.

"I don't think Sinny would like to go to the party," said mamma, sitting down in her low rocking-chair, and drawing Ainslee to her.

"Oh, but yes he would, mamma," said Ainslee; "an' he cried when Amanda said he wasn't fit to come to parties. He shall come to all mine, any way."

"I don't know whether it would be best or not," said mamma, after a few moments' silence. "I rather think not."

"Why, mamma," said Ainslee, indignantly, "I thought you liked Sinny. I didn't know you was going to be mean too."

"Hush, dear," said mamma, gently. "By and by, perhaps not till you are old enough to have children of your own, I hope the time will

have come, when no one will stop to think whether people are black or white, so long as they do right; but now almost every one dislikes to have much to do with negroes, except as servants. Sinny is quite as bright a boy as Tommy Martin, and Tommy would be glad enough to have him at the party, if his father and mother had not taught him that he must not be too much with 'niggers.' All the children feel so, because they have always heard it at home; and even if Sinny went, he would not have a good time. They would either refuse to play with him, or say such unkind things, that Sinny would feel much worse than if he had stayed at home. You don't want that he should have to cry again, do you?"

"No, mamma," said Ainslee; "but when they all play with him at school, I don't see why they shouldn't at the party."

"It isn't easy to understand," said mamma. "One thing is, that people as poor as most negroes are, cannot send their children to school very much, and so they know less than white children, and often get into wicked ways, which fathers and mothers do not want their little boys and girls to learn. A good many of them, I dare say, think Sinny is just like a great many colored children, dirty, and full of naughty ways, when

really he is a nice little boy. If all colored children were brought up as he is, people would soon forget the difference between black and white."

"Well," said Ainslee, "it's a mean shame any way. He's as clean as any of 'em, only clean don't show on him. Can't I give him some calamels, mamma?"

"Yes," said mamma. "I'll give you a few to take to school to-morrow, and you can share with him if you like. Now we will go down and see grandma."

"Amanda don't know any better, does she, mamma?" said Ainslee, stopping on the way down-stairs.

"She does just what her father and mother have taught her, I suppose," mamma answered.

"Then I can make up with her if I'm a mind to, can't I? and I'll tell Sinny he wouldn't have a good time if he did go to the party, 'cause nobody knows enough to let him."

"Very well," said mamma, smiling, and Ainslee, whose appetite had all come back, went to Ann for his mince-pie.

Sinny stood at the gate next morning, waiting for him, and the two children walked on together.

"I don't care much if I don't go to the party," said Sinny, after a time. "I told gran'ther, an'

he said I needn't care a speck; and when he went down to the Falls, he'd buy me a first-rate little wagon, to haul stones or anything in: big enough to haul you in if I was a mind to."

"You draw me, an' then I'll draw you," said Ainslee, delighted. "I've got something in my basket for you: calamels!"

"What's them?" said Sinny.

"Eat one an' see," said Ainslee, handing him one. "My mamma made 'em; ain't they good?"

"Bully!" said Sinny. "How many you goin' to give me?"

"Three more," said Ainslee. "Four a-piece, mamma gived me. I'm going to eat one now, so's to be even with you, an' let's save the rest for recess."

"Well," said Sinny, and just then they came up to Tommy and Amanda, walking with Billy Howard and Sampson Simmons.

"Don't you tell Amanda I gived you any calamels," whispered Ainslee to Sinny, wishing to surprise her when to-morrow came.

"Don't tell Amanda what?" said Sampson, who had heard the whisper. "Ainslee's got a secret from you, 'Mandy. He tells Sinny things, an' he won't tell you."

"I'm going to tell her to-morrow," said Ainslee, looking indignantly at Sampson.

"I don't want to know," said Amanda; "he needn't tell me anything. I don't like him. What you eatin', Sinny?"

"Nothin'," said Sinny.

"You be, too," said Sampson, trying to snatch the caramel Sinny had in his hand. "What's that? It's molasses candy, I bet."

"'Tain't no such a thing," said Sinny. "It's New York candy, and there don't anybody have 'em but Ainslee Barton. *You* can't get one of 'em."

"I should think you might give some to 'Mandy," said Tommy.

"Well, I will," said Ainslee. "I mean I'd just as soon, only I don't want to now."

"I wouldn't take 'em, any way," said Billy Howard. "He gives 'em to Sinny, an' don't give none to you. He's mean as dirt."

"So he is," said Amanda. "I don't want any o' your old candy. I wish I hadn't asked you to my party."

"I don't much want to come now, any way," Ainslee began, with tears in his eyes.

"Oh, bother!" said Tommy. "What's the use o' fighting every minute? Look a-here, Ainslee, ain't that a nice whistle?" and Tommy blew a soft, clear note, almost like a flute.

"I know how to make one," said Ainslee,

half forgetting Amanda. "Joe Culligan showed me how, only my knife won't cut sharp. I wish I had a new one. I'm tired of this old thing."

Ding dong went the school-bell, and the children hurried on to the school-room. Sampson took the end of the bench next to Amanda, and Ainslee let him. Amanda was "put out" still, and till she made up, he might as well be in the middle as anywhere. So he went to work at his spelling lesson, and Amanda, who felt half sorry now for what she had said, and who meant to smile when he looked up, grew first tired, and then cross again, at having to wait so long, and finally turned her attention to Sampson.

"I'll play I like Sampson best," she said to herself, "and then maybe Ainslee'll be sorry he didn't give me candy instead o' Sinny."

So she picked up a splinter from the floor, and wrapping it in a bit of paper she tore from her Reader, threw it at Sampson the first time Ainslee looked toward her. Sampson put it in his pocket as though it were something very choice indeed, and nodded to Amanda, who smiled, and nodded back again, and Ainslee felt very miserable, — so miserable, that he missed two words of his spelling, and forgot his table, and when recess time came, was kept in; and instead of making up at once with Amanda as he had in-

tended, couldn't even speak to her, but saw her walk out with Sampson, who made faces at him through the window, till Miss Barrett rapped on it, and sent him away.

After recess it was just as bad. Sampson was delighted at the turn things seemed to have taken, and believing the best way to keep in favor was to abuse Ainslee, crowded against him, and knocked his books to the floor, and finally sat very still a few minutes, contriving something which should not be seen by Miss Barrett so easily as his other ways of plaguing. The result was, that Ainslee, bending over his Reader, was startled by a sharp prick, which certainly came from Sampson's side. He looked up. Both Sampson's hands were holding his Spelling-book, and could not have done it.

"I expose there's a pin in my sleeve," said he to himself, turning away, and feeling up his arm. "No there isn't. What did prick me so? Ouch!" he cried, jumping up suddenly, for there it came again.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Miss Barrett, severely.

"Something pricked me dreadful," said Ainslee. "It was Sampson, I do believe."

"There ain't a single pin anywheres in my hand," said Sampson. "I've been studying my spelling lesson every minute."

"See that you don't do it again, if it was you," said Miss Barrett.

"Maybe he pricked himself, an' then said it was me," said Sampson.

"Oh, ain't you a horrid" — began Ainslee, but Miss Barrett stopped him.

"Not a word more. If you do such a thing as that, Ainslee Barton, I shall have to ruler you on both hands. Now study your lesson."

Ainslee turned to his book, feeling as if everything were against him, and studied a few minutes till a still sharper prick made him quite desperate.

"I won't sit still and be pricked every minute!" he shouted. "Ho! look a-there now! He's got it in his sleeve, Miss Barrett, sticking right out at his elbow."

"Come up here, both of you, this minute," said Miss Barrett. "So that's the way you do, is it, Sampson Simmons?" and she drew out a pin which Sampson had bent in his elbow in such a way that, with a very slight motion, he could stick it into Ainslee, and which he had tried in vain to pull out before Miss Barrett should see it. "Ainslee Barton, you go stand in the entry for making such a noise; and Sampson, you hold out your hand."

Sampson went back to his seat in a few mo-

ments with his arm over his eyes, and was too busy with crying for some time, to pay any attention to Amanda. At noon Ainslee ran home fast as he could go, not waiting to eat his lunch with the others as usual, and stamped into the kitchen with such a red face, that Ann looked at him astonished.

"What now, Ainslee?" said mamma, as he sat down in his small chair, and threw his books on grandma's lounge.

"I hate Sampson, and I don't love Amanda one speck," poor Ainslee began. "Amanda won't play with me, or speak to me, and she wasn't sorry when Sampson stuck pins in me, an' I had to stand in the entry. I'd cry, if I wasn't so mad with her."

Pretty soon mamma knew the whole story, and Ainslee felt very much better when it was told.

"Everything will come right to-morrow," she said. "Amanda will like the caramels very much, and I don't think she is really angry either. You will make up at the party, I am quite sure."

"Any way, I wish Samp wasn't going to be there," said Ainslee. "I never did know such an ugly boy."

"Treat him as well as you can," said mamma,

"and perhaps he will be better by and by," and Ainslee went down to the kitchen for some hot gingerbread, feeling much more hopeful.

Amanda was not at school the next morning, and as Sampson was sulking, and said nothing, Ainslee had a very comfortable time, and went home at noon in high spirits. Nurse had laid his gray suit on the bed in mamma's room, and he wanted to be dressed at once.

"You'll get into the pig-pen the minute you are," said nurse. "I sha'n't put on your best clothes till your ma says so."

Ainslee ran to ask her, and found her in grandmamma's room, busy looking over the drawers of an old bureau.

"Oh, what's in 'em?" said he. "Let me look too, mamma."

"Nothing you will care to see," said mamma. "If you were a little girl, you would beg for those pieces of ribbon and lace; as it is, I don't see anything here but this pipe, which can do you any good."

"A pipe can't. I don't want a pipe," said Ainslee. "Oh, I do too! I know what you mean! I can blow bubbles. Mayn't I blow 'em where baby can see?"

"Yes," said mamma. "Ask Ann to make you some strong soap-suds, and be careful not to spill any as you go up-stairs."

Here was work for an afternoon, and Ainslee carried his pipe and suds up to the nursery, and put them in the wide window-seat, where the sun shone in on each bubble he blew. Some he dropped on the board in front of baby's chair, who clutched them, and then looked at his fat fingers, wondering why there was nothing in them. Nurse showed him how to drop one small one after another from the pipe, so that four or five were on the carpet at once, and then he made great ones, and blew them up into the air. There were so many things which could be done, and the stopping to talk to baby took up so much time, that he was surprised when half past three came, and nurse said she was ready to give him a bath. By four o'clock Ainslee was quite ready to start, and mamma brought in a gay little basket she had bought from an Indian long ago, almost filled with the caramels.

"This is your birthday present to Amanda," she said, "and you can hand it to her when you say 'How d'ye do.'"

Ainslee walked off, after hugging mamma hard, thinking he should have no trouble at all in speaking to Amanda, but as he drew nearer to the house, remembered all that had happened the day before, and almost wished he had stayed at home. Too late for that though, for Tommy,

standing in the door, had spied him, and ran out at once, to find out what could be in the basket.

"You ought to a-seen how slick all the boys an' girls looked in school this afternoon," said Tommy. "They was all dressed so's to come right to the party after school, an' Miss Barrett asked if they thought it was Sunday. She didn't know it was 'Mandy's birthday. What you got in that basket, Ainslee?"

"Something for Amanda," said Ainslee. "Let's hurry in."

Mrs. Martin met him at the door, and told him he could go into her room and take his coat and cap off, and then stand on a stool before the glass and see if his hair was tumbled. Ainslee hurried through with this, and then went into the parlor with little Charley Stearns, who didn't dare go alone.

Amanda stood in one corner, dressed in white, with several of the little girls about her, and for half a second Ainslee hesitated. Then he went to her and held out the basket.

"I'm real glad you're five years old," he said, "and here's something 'cause you are."

Amanda turned very red as she took the basket, and said "Thank you" in so low a voice, Ainslee could hardly hear her.

"You'll give me some, won't you, 'Mandy?" said Sampson, looking over her shoulder.

"No, I won't," said Amanda, so suddenly, that Sampson stepped back quickly. "You ain't a nice boy. I can't bear you."

"Hity tity!" said Mrs. Martin, who had just come in. "Don't you quarrel any at your party, 'Mandy. Why don't you play something?"

"We're goin' to this minute," said Tommy. "Come on; let's have 'Fox an' Geese.'"

One game followed another, and the children were surprised when Mrs. Martin opened the door into the dining-room, and told them it was time to come to supper.

"They've got five kinds o' cake, besides doughnuts," whispered Sampson to Billy Howard. "I peeked in a good while ago, an' counted when there wasn't anybody looking, an' I'm going to eat every kind there is. Maybe I'll have two pieces o' each."

"I don't believe you will," said Tommy, who was close behind. "You ain't goin' to have more'n anybody else."

Sampson looked a little ashamed, but as Dr. Brown was seen at his mother's door next morning, and he was out of school for two or three days, I rather think he had all he said he would, and perhaps more.

As the supper ended, and the children flocked

back to the parlor, Amanda came up close to Ainslee.

"Stay here a minute," she said. "Mother's got something for you."

"Yes," said Mrs. Martin. "'Mandy told me you wanted Sinny to come to the party, an' she wouldn't give me any peace, teasin' me to let him. I wasn't going to do that, but I told her she could have some cake an' things for him, an' if you was a mind to, you could stop at Sinny's going home with your grandpa, an' give 'em to him."

"Why, ain't that nice?" said Ainslee, whose face was one broad smile. "Won't he be tickled? I like you, Mrs. Martin."

"Do you?" said Mrs. Martin, laughing. "Well, when you're ready to go home, you jest come out here an' get that bundle."

Ainslee kept close by Amanda through the rest of the evening, and when grandpa came, at half past seven, would have objected decidedly to going home, had it not been for the bundle.

"Don't let's ever not make up again, Amanda," he whispered to her, as Tommy and she followed him to the door.

"I love you, Ainslee," Amanda answered, "an' I ain't ever goin' to stop."

"What's in this bundle, Ainslee?" said

grandpa, as they walked on. "'Tisn't a good plan to take things home from a party."

"They ain't mine at all, grandpa," said Ainslee; "they're all for Sinny. Mrs. Martin said he was to have 'em 'cause he didn't come to the party, an' I want you to stop at Nancy's, grandpa, so's to give 'em to him."

"Won't to-morrow do?"

"Why no, grandpa," said Ainslee. "You wouldn't want to wait, if you was a little boy, would you?"

"No, I don't suppose I should," grandpa answered, and by this time they were at old Peter Smith's. Grandpa knocked at the door, and Nancy opened it, looking a little surprised to see Ainslee at such a late hour.

"Where's Sinny?" said he, running in. "He isn't in bed, is he?"

"Yes he is," said Nancy, "an' sound asleep too. What you want?"

"I want him to get up right away, quick," said Ainslee. "Mayn't he, Nancy? I've got something for him."

"Well, yes," said Nancy, after a minute. "You can go with me an' wake him up."

Sinny's woolly head lay on the pillow, his eyes were shut tight, and Ainslee looked at him a moment before touching him.

"Don't he look funny asleep?" he said. "Sinny, wake up! Here's something for you; wake right up!" and Ainslee shook him as hard as he could.

"You stop that, Samp Simmons," Sinny said, sitting up in bed, and opening his eyes. "I'll punch you if you don't. Why, Ainslee! I didn't know it was you. I thought it was school, an' Samp was plaguing me. Ain't it night?"

"Yes, it's night," said Ainslee. "But Amanda's sent you something from the party, an' I've come to bring it. Come into the kitchen and see."

Sinny hopped out of bed and into the kitchen in his yellow flannel night-gown, and sat down by the table, a little confused at finding grandpa Walton there.

"It's a big bundle," he said, as he untied the string and pulled off the paper. "My-y! just look a-here!" and Sinny sat quite silent a moment, and then laughed aloud. "Why, there 's cake with sugar on top, an' nuts, an' raisins, an' candy — three sticks! Oh!"

"Lots!" said Ainslee. "What will you do with it all, Sinny?"

"Eat it up," said Sinny, beginning on a stick of candy, "an' I'll give some to mother, an' some to gran'ther. I'll give 'Mandy sun'thin' too, only I don't know what."

"Make her a horse-hair ring," said Ainslee. "an' I'll give you some red beads to put in it."

"Then you come up here to-morrow," said Sinny. "No, I'll come down to your house, 'cause I want some black hairs out o' your horse's tail. I've got plenty o' white ones out of ourn."

Sinny did go down next day, and with the red beads, and black and white hair, made a very pretty ring. Mrs. Barton, who had been told all about it by Ainslee, gave them a little white box in which a thimble had come, and filled it with pink cotton on which to lay the ring. Then Ainslee printed AMANDUR on it, in large letters, and Mrs. Barton tied it up nicely. Sinny could hardly wait over Sunday, and took it out of his pocket so many times, that his mother said it would be all worn out before Amanda got it.

Monday morning came at last, and Sinny was on the school-house steps before anybody else. Billy Howard got there next, and then Ainslee, and then Tommy and Amanda came in sight. Sinny ran forward to meet them, for he did not want Billy Howard to see.

"I've got something for you, 'Mandy," he said, as he came up to her. "I made it all myself."

Amanda opened the box. "Why, it's a ring!"

she said. "I never had a ring. Ain't it pretty?"

"Ainslee had the beads, but I did it," said Sinny; "an' I made it just to fit my littlest finger, 'cause yours is all smaller'n mine, an' Ainslee's is fatter'n any of us."

"It's a beauty!" said Amanda, putting it on, and looking at it with great admiration.

"I wouldn't wear a ring he made," said Billy Howard, who had run to them fast as he could, when he saw them all stopping together.

"Yes you would, if you could get it," said Tommy.

"No fear he will," Sinny said. "I don't make rings for anybody that ain't just first-rate. You get out, Billy Howard."

The school-bell rang, and Miss Barrett said "Hurry!" as she passed on, so the quarrel ended there. Amanda looked at her ring so often, that she almost forgot to look at her lesson, and at night told her mother, she thought Sinny was 'most as nice for a black boy as Ainslee for a white one.

XV.

BARRELS AND BEANS.

"O MAMMA!" shouted Ainslee, running in from school a few days after the party, "there's going to be vacation next week for three whole weeks, an' then school's going to begin again. Miss Barrett said it would begin the first o' June an' keep till August; an' then there's going to be a Dezamination, and we've all got to speak pieces. There's going to be people and everything to hear us. Pick out a nice piece for me to speak, mamma."

"This minute?" said mamma. "Because, if you can wait a little while, it will give me time to try on this cap."

"What cap?" said Ainslee. "Why, it's a new one! Is it for me?"

"Yes," said mamma. "Your winter one is very shabby, and it is too soon to put on a straw hat, so I have made you a Scotch cap from these pieces of velvet. You can keep this for school, and wear the old one when you are playing at home. What have you in your hand?"

"Two whistles," said Ainslee. "I made 'em both, only Tommy helped me with one. Sinny's in the wood-house, and we're going to have a concert with my drum and a tin pan."

"Boo!" said a voice from somewhere.

"Why, what's that?" said Ainslee, jumping.

"There must be a bear under the bed, I think," said mamma. "Look and see."

Ainslee lifted the valance, but before he could really see, was caught by the leg and held tight, while somebody behind put their hands over his eyes.

"Guess who it is," said a voice.

"Why, it's Lizzie," screamed Ainslee, delighted. "And Jack is under the bed."

"No he isn't," said Jack, scrambling out. "Come on; let's go to the concert."

"But I thought you was in New York," said Ainslee. "When did you come?"

"This very noon, up from the Falls, in the cars," said Lizzie; "and we was so afraid you'd be home from school before we got here. Jack ran right under the bed first thing, and aunty put me under her hoop, 'cause she said you'd be here right off. Ain't you very glad we've come?"

"I guess I am," said Ainslee. "Let's go right out to the wood-house."

"Dinner first," said mamma, "and then all the play you want. I hear the bell now."

"This is the reason you didn't want me to take any lunch this morning, isn't it, mamma?" "You knew all the time they were coming."

"I guess so," said mamma, as they went into the dining-room, where Ainslee found Uncle John and Aunt Sue, looking just as they had done last Thanksgiving.

"You're going to stay ever and ever so long, ain't you?" said Ainslee, as dinner went on.

"Not this time," Uncle John answered. "I must go home early to-morrow morning, but Aunt Sue can do as she pleases."

"Oh, stay, do!" said Ainslee. "I don't want Lizzie and Jack to go away."

"Suppose I leave them," said Aunt Sue, laughing. "You seem quite willing to do without me, and perhaps grandma will not mind two more grandchildren for a few days."

"No indeed," said grandma. "They're very good children, and I'd love to have them stay. You're not very polite, Ainslee. I thought you loved Aunt Sue."

"So I do, ever so," said Ainslee. "Only I'd rather have her go home than Lizzie or Jack, 'cause I can't play with her, and there's lots o' things I want to do. But I wish you'd all stay."

"Where *is* Ainslee?" sounded Sinny's voice from the kitchen. "I'm awful tired waiting for him."

"Here I am," called Ainslee, giving Aunt Sue a little hug as he ran by her. "Please to 'scuse all of us, grandma, 'cause we're going to have a concert. Won't Sinny be susprised?"

Sinny smiled from ear to ear, as the three ran into the kitchen. He wore a paper cap with a feather in it, and the drum was hung around his neck by a red cord.

"Oh, that's the way you do, is it?" said Jack. "You got a cap, Ainslee?"

"No," said Ainslee. "I don't know how to make 'em."

"Well, I do," said Jack. "You get me some newspapers, two of 'em, and we'll all have caps and epaulets too. Bring some pins."

Jack spread out the papers which Ainslee brought, and very soon had three caps ready. Then he folded some pieces of paper a good many times, and cut the ends into narrow strips, which he crumpled a little in his hand as he pulled them open, and then pinned to his and the other children's shoulders.

"Now we're the band o' the New York Seventh Regiment," said he. "What'll I play on?"

"'Now we're the band o' the New York Seventh Regiment,' said he." —
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"One o' these whistles," said Ainslee, "unless grandpa'll let you have the old dinner-horn."

"He won't," said Jack, after a moment's disappearance in the dining-room. "He says the neighbors would all be in if I blew that, but he let me have your tin trumpet out o' his drawer."

"Why it's been gone ever so long," said Ainslee, surprised to see it. "I'll always ask grandpa now if I lose anything. You've got a trumpet, Jack, an' I've got a whistle, and Sinny a drum. What'll you play on, Lizzie?"

"There's beans out in the wood-house, lots of 'em," said Sinny. "She might shake beans in a tin pan, and ring your little bell."

"So I will," said Lizzie, delighted, and the four ran out to the wood-house, from whence there came, by and by, such a racket, that grandma said it was a wonder the whole town didn't come up to see what the matter was. After a while they formed a procession, and marched around the house, still playing, till the big people were almost distracted, and at last, down into the meadow, where little Joe Culligan joined them. The sun set too soon altogether, and bed-time never had seemed such a little while after supper. Mamma left the doors open

between the children's rooms, and they talked back and forth, till nurse said the baby would wake right up, unless they kept stiller.

Very soon after this, sleep came, but left them long before the grown up people's eyes thought of opening. Ainslee heard Jack and Lizzie whispering for some time, and at last, not able to keep away one minute longer, ran in to them. The whispering grew louder, and there was a giggle now and then, and at last a squeal, and then a good many of them; and when mamma, an hour later, looked in for a moment, to call Ainslee, she saw the sheets and quilts made into a tent, under which a whirlwind seemed to be going on.

"You are a noisy set," said she. "Do you believe grandma will keep you here if you go on like this?"

"She can't hear us much, I guess," said Ainslee. "Baby makes more noise than anybody."

"Baby!" said mamma, in astonishment. "Is baby here? I thought nurse had him."

"No," said Ainslee. "I sort of touched him when I was getting out o' bed, and he stood right up in his crib a-looking at me, an' you was sound asleep, so I just brought him here."

Mamma looked under the sheet, and saw baby tumbling over all three of the children, and squealing with delight.

"Come, baby," she said; but baby did not want to leave the play, and Lizzie had to lift him off the bed, and run with him into mamma's room.

"Lizzie and Jack can go to school with me, can't they?" asked Ainslee, after breakfast. "It's Wednesday now, and school's goin' to stop Friday, for ever so long. Three whole weeks."

"Yes," said Aunt Sue, after thinking a moment. "Perhaps that is the best thing to do with you, but you must promise not to whisper. Grandma says you may stay here as long as I can spare you; a whole week, perhaps. Shall you be good?"

"To be sure we shall," Jack answered. "Ain't we always good, mother?"

"Pretty good," said Aunt Sue. "I shall leave you in grandma's care, and you must mind all she says. We shall start for home before you get back from school, and next week Tuesday, if it is pleasant, we will come over for you."

Lizzie hugged her mother as if she were hardly willing to let her go, and even Jack seemed a little doubtful for a minute.

"Come," called Ainslee. "I've got my new cap on, and I'm all ready to start. Oh my! why here's my barrel right in the bottom of all the things."

"What?" said Lizzie, running up to the drawer where his things were kept. "Why, it's a real little barrel! It would hold a quart of water: where did it come from?"

"Mamma gave it to me, and Uncle Ainslee gave it to her," said Ainslee. "It came from way off. I'm a great mind to take it to school. I don't believe Tommy or Amanda ever saw it."

"Who's Amanda?" asked Lizzie.

"Oh, she's a little girl," Ainslee answered. "She's most smaller'n you, Lizzie, but she's real nice. Shall we take our dinners, mamma?"

"Not to-day," said mamma, "for I don't think Lizzie will care to stay longer than noon. You can play half an hour after school, if you like, and Tommy and Amanda may come here to tea, if their mother is willing."

"O you lovely mamma!" said Ainslee. "Won't we have a good time? Can I take my barrel to school?"

"I am afraid it will make you play," said mamma, who was in a great hurry, and went away at once with Aunt Sue.

"She didn't say I mustn't," said Ainslee. "I'll leave it in the entry till recess; it'll hold a lot of licorice water."

"Lot of *what?*" said Lizzie.

"Why, licorice water," said Ainslee. "Don't

you know what that is? All the boys and girls that can, take bottles, and put licorice stick in the bottom, and fill 'em with water, an' then they make a hole in the cork an' suck 'em every chance they get."

"Tisn't good, is it?" said Lizzie.

"Not so very; only pretty good," said Ainslee.

"Don't let's make it at school," said Lizzie. "I've got four cunning little tumblers in the trunk, for my baby-house, and this afternoon we'll make a lot, and play it's soda-water, and sell it."

"Let's get a lot o' cookies and things from grandma, and keep a restaurant," said Jack.

"What's that?" said Ainslee.

"Why, it's a store where they sell dinners," said Jack. "Don't you remember? There's lots of 'em in New York."

"Well," Ainslee said, "let's hurry now, anyway; it's most school time," and the three started off.

Sinny stood by the gate, as they came to old Peter Smith's; I might better say, danced at the gate, for he certainly was not standing still.

"Gran'ther wouldn't let me take it down this morning," said he, "but you come into the barn this minute. It's all hickory an' oak, gran'ther

said, an' its iron-bound, an' all. I couldn't break it if I was to try."

"Break what?" said Jack. "I do believe you're crazy, Sinny Smith. You go right in and ask your mother to put you to bed. Oh! ain't that a splendid wagon?" he added, as they went in at the barn door.

Sure enough, Sinny's wagon had come: oak and hickory, as he had said, the wheels tired like those of a big wagon, and the back made to let down.

"I can haul a bushel o' potatoes in that," said Sinny. "An' gran'ther's goin' to pay me for helping him in the fall. I'm a-goin' to bring it down to your house this afternoon."

"Won't that be fun?" said Jack. "We're all goin' to play this afternoon, Sinny, and I know what we'll do."

"Oh, what?" said Ainslee. "My! there's the bell; we've got to run."

Off the four started, and got there just in time to take their places; Lizzie by Amanda, and Jack between Sampson and Ainslee.

"She's my cousin Lizzie," Ainslee had found time to whisper, as he passed Amanda, and Amanda, after a few minutes of looking steadily at her, decided she was quite nice enough to be Ainslee's cousin, and gave her hand a little squeeze. Liz-

zie had been holding her head down, just a little frightened, and half wishing she had stayed at home; but now, as she looked up and saw Amanda's bright eyes looking pleasantly at her, she returned the squeeze, and thought, after all, that she was glad she had come.

"Do you want to come to school, little girl?" said Miss Barrett, when she had finished calling the roll. "Because, if you do, you must wait till the first of June. There are only two more days before vacation."

"I know it, ma'am," said Lizzie. "I'm only company."

"Oh!" said Miss Barrett. "Well, you must n't play."

"Come and read with me," said Amanda, and Lizzie went into the class, and read and spelled, just as if she belonged there, while Jack did the same with the little boys. Recess came very soon, and they all went out together.

"Ain't Ainslee Barton proud?" said Sampson. "He's got that Johnny Walton along, an' he's so stuck up to think he's been to New York, he can't look at anybody else."

"'Mandy's the proudest," said little Sarah Jones. "You couldn't touch her with a ten-foot pole."

To tell the truth, Amanda had given her skirts

a little flirt as she walked out of the school-room with her arm around Lizzie's waist, and a good many of them, when she heard the invitation to take tea at Grandpa Walton's that afternoon.

"Put on your hat an' let's run down to the spring," she said. "Oh, what's that, rolled up in your sack?"

"Why, it's Ainslee's barrel," said Lizzie, and just then Ainslee walked out with Jack, several of the children following close behind.

"Oh, ain't that pretty?" said Tommy. "Will it hold anything?"

"Good as can be," said Ainslee. "I'm going to fill it with water down to the spring, an' then drink out of it. Come on; we'll all take turns."

"Ainslee's got a new cap," said Juliana Johnson, one of the "big" girls, as the little ones called her, for she was almost thirteen. "He gets more stuck up every day, and so do Tommy and 'Mandy Martin. I'll do something to plague him now, you see if I don't."

"What'll you do?" said Charley Stearns, who stood near her.

"Never you mind," said Juliana. "I'll just get him good an' put out. I guess he ain't so much better'n anybody else. You see what I'll do now."

Juliana ran down to the spring, where half a

dozen children had gathered about Ainslee, who, with his barrel full of water, stood there pouring from it into a small tin cup, which he passed to each one in turn.

"It tastes choky," said Lizzie. "Why, it's full o' dust, Ainslee! The barrel's all dirty inside, I do believe. Let me take it."

Lizzie took it, shook it hard, and then poured out the water, which came away quite filled with dust and lint.

"It's been in the blanket-closet ever so long," said Ainslee; "most ever since mamma was a little girl."

"Then it ought to be dirty," said Lizzie. "I'll shake it again, and then it will be all clean. There now; you fill it from way down among the stones, 'cause I shall get my dress wet if I do."

Ainslee stooped down with his barrel, and Juliana, who had been standing there two or three minutes, made a dash at the Scotch cap, and then holding it in her hand, ran up the hill fast as she could go.

"What's that for?" said Ainslee, getting up. "What you doing, Lizzie? Why, it's that hateful Juliana Johnson! Give me my cap this minute."

"Get it when you can!" sung Juliana from

the top of the hill, swinging it around by the ribbon at the back.

"You take the barrel, Jack," said Ainslee, "and I'll chase her. She'll spoil it."

Ainslee started on a run, but the school-bell rang before he got to the top of the hill. Juliana had taken her place at her desk, and held the cap so that he could just see it as he went in.

"I'd tell Miss Barrett," said Ainslee to himself, "only mamma says never to tell tales. Maybe she'll give it back at noon," and he turned to his spelling lesson. Noon came very soon, and Ainslee, who had lost all desire to stay and play, waited in the entry till Juliana came out for her dinner-pail.

"Now let me have my cap, 'cause I want to go home," he said.

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Juliana. "Well, you ain't goin' to get it just yet, that's all. I'm goin' to pay you up for makin' that face at me last week."

"You give it to me this minute," said Ainslee, growing very red. "Make her, Jack."

"It'll take more'n Jack to make me," said Juliana, sitting down by her desk, and opening her dinner-pail. "I'm goin' to eat my dinner. You can go home for once without a cap, I guess."

"Come out," said Tommy. "I'll tell you what to do. You take your barrel an' fill it full o' water, an' if she won't give your cap back, you just pour it all down her back."

"Well," said Ainslee, and he filled the barrel from the water-pail which stood in the entry. "Put it under your sack, Lizzie, so't she won't see," he said, "and maybe she'll give it back without my having to empty anything on her."

"I'd empt it, any way," said Sinny. "She's an awful ugly girl; she used to plague me."

Ainslee walked into the school-room again. "Now Juliana Johnson," he said, "will you give me back my cap?"

"No I won't, so now," said Juliana, turning her back, and going on with her dinner.

"Then I'll pour my barrel o' water all down your back," shouted Ainslee, seizing the barrel from Lizzie; and before Juliana could turn, the water was streaming over her, and Ainslee had dashed into the entry for more. Juliana sat perfectly still a moment, too astonished to move, and then sprang toward the entry, furious with passion. Ainslee, almost as angry as she, was on the way back with another barrelful, and raised his hand to throw it as she came on.

"Oh, you'll throw another, will you?" said

Juliana. "There now!" and before Ainslee thought what she meant to do, her sharp teeth had almost met in his hand.

Ainslee screamed, and held out the hand from which the blood streamed, and Miss Barrett, who had been sitting at her desk reading, and paying no attention to what was going on in the school-room, ran into the entry, alarmed by the screaming which Lizzie and Amanda kept up, while Juliana, frightened at what she had done, pulled her hood from the nail, and ran home fast as possible.

"Mercy on us!" said Miss Barrett, as she looked at Ainslee's hand. "Here; stick it right into the water-pail; that'll make it stop bleeding. Now, one of you tell me right away how this happened."

"Juliana Johnson stole his cap at recess," said Tommy, after a minute's hesitation, "and she wouldn't let him have it this noon. He asked her ever so many times, an' she wouldn't, an' then I told him to pour a barrel o' water down her neck, an' he did, an' then she got mad an' bit him."

"A barrel of water?" said Miss Barrett. "I should think you were all crazy together."

"That barrel down there," said Tommy, pointing to the little barrel which lay on the floor.

"Don't you ever bring such a thing to school again," said Miss Barrett, jerking Ainslee's hand from the water, and wrapping his handkerchief tightly around it. "Now run home, fast as you can. You won't pour any more water down people's backs, I guess."

Tommy brought the cap from Juliana's desk, and a very solemn procession started from the school-house door, Lizzie holding Ainslee's well hand, while Amanda and she cried for sympathy. Sinny carried the barrel, and Jack, Ainslee's books.

"Merciful man!" said grandma, sitting at her bedroom window, as she saw Ainslee come crying into the back-yard. "Look there, Clara!"

"What is the matter?" said mamma, anxiously, meeting them at the door. "Are you hurt, Ainslee?"

"I'm bited 'most to death," said Ainslee, finding voice for the first time. "Juliana Johnson bited a hole in my hand."

"Come into grandma's room," said mamma, "and you can tell me about it while I bind it up."

The bite was really a very bad one; the handkerchief had stuck to it, and Ainslee cried again, while mamma washed the blood off, and then put some little strips of sticking-plaster over it, to keep the air out.

"You must have it in a sling to-day," she said, "else you may use it more than you should, and make it very sore. Now tell me how it happened; you first, Jack, and then Ainslee."

"Juliana was very naughty," said mamma, when both stories ended, — "very naughty indeed; but was nobody else naughty, too?"

"I was, some," said Ainslee. "But she had n't any business to bite me."

"Perhaps she is sorry by this time," said mamma. "At any rate, the bite may make you remember that some trouble always comes from getting into a passion. You were right and Juliana wrong, till you threw the water on her; but by doing that, you became naughty too. You should have told Miss Barrett, when you found Juliana would not give the cap back."

"But I thought you said I mustn't ever tell tales," said Ainslee.

"If Juliana had taken the cap in fun, and meant to give it right back, it would have been telling tales, if you had spoken to Miss Barrett," said mamma. "But from both your story and Jack's, I think she did not mean to, and so it would have been only just that Miss Barrett should be asked to make her do right. Your best rule is, never to tell of any mere mischief which does you no harm, and only requires a little pa-

tience to bear. If it turns from mischief into spitefulness, though, and you find that neither fun nor gentleness can do anything for you, you are right in going to some higher power, though it is seldom necessary. You see, carrying the barrel to school was a bad thing to do, for if it had been left at home, very likely Tommy would never have thought of pouring water over Juliana. The pain you feel now is a hard punishment for any mischief you have done with it, so this time I shall not take it away, but you must never carry it to school again."

"No I won't," said Ainslee. "I want to lie down, mamma; my head aches."

All that afternoon Ainslee felt very forlorn. Before night his hand had swollen so much, that mamma took off some of the sticking-plaster, and kept it wrapped in cold water, but the next morning it felt very comfortable, and by afternoon he was quite well enough to play for an hour or two out-doors. The tea-party was put off, and Tommy and Amanda did not come down until Saturday afternoon, when the hand, though still tied up, felt almost well. Sinny appeared with his wagon, which he had not been allowed to bring down before, and the party settled themselves in the wood-house for a long play, provided with apples and doughnuts, a plate of cookies, and the two

dozen tin hearts and rounds, which Ann had been coaxed into lending them.

"Now, I'll tell you," said Jack. "Let's play this is a dépôt, you know, an' Sinny's wagon the cars. Sinny and Tommy can take turns being locomotives, and all the rest can be passengers, and stop here for dinner. There's Charley Stearns out there. Hallo, Charley! you come and play too."

"Ma said I might stay if you wanted me to," said Charley, coming in. "I heard what you said. You have to pay at a dépôt. You haven't got any money, have you?"

"Don't want money," said Jack. "There's speckled beans over there. Pay in beans."

So, while Ainslee and Amanda shelled some beans, and picked up the loose ones from the bottom of the box, Jack and Lizzie set a fine table on the bench, which had been dragged from the tool-house for that purpose. There was a birch-bark pan filled with cracked butternuts, and two pieces of birch-bark for plates, with apples on them. Every heart and round had a cooky or doughnut in it, and in the very middle was the barrel, full of licorice water, with the four little tumblers in front of it. Then the passengers filled their pockets with beans, and the trains began to run. Sinny started from the

big butternut-tree by the gate, and came tooting into the wood-house with Lizzie as his first passenger, and then back again for Amanda.

"Three minutes for dinner!" shouted Jack. "Hurry up, ma'am. What'll you take?"

"I'll take two beans' worth o' cooky, an' four beans' worth o' licorice water, and twenty beans' worth o' butternuts," said Amanda.

"You mustn't say *beans*; you must say *shillings*," said Jack. "Here come more passengers. How are you, Mr. Stearns? Glad to see you this way, sir. What will you have? Three minutes for dinner, sir."

"Apple," said Charley. "Look a here, though; they don't keep eatin' down at the dépôt all the time the passengers do. You're eatin' every minute."

"Well, I'm hungry," said Jack. "I'm going to stop pretty soon, and let Ainslee keep the table while I play passenger."

Ainslee took his place presently, and very soon all were in the wood-house but Sinny, who stood looking in.

"The injine wants somethin' to eat," he said. "I think somebody might drag me in."

"Well, I will," said Tommy. "Here goes. Look out for the locomotive when the bell rings!" and Sinny who had run back to the tree,

and seated himself in his wagon, found himself suddenly on a pile of sawdust in the wood-house. The cookies were going too fast, to leave any time for talking about the matter, and no more trains were run, till the table was thoroughly cleared.

"I wish we hadn't been hungry," said Ainslee, "and then we might have played so a good while. We ought to have some more things to keep a table."

"No, we've played that enough, I guess," said Jack. "I'll tell you what we'll do. Let's go down into the meadow where Culligan is, and we'll get him to let us plant the beans the passengers paid. There's grandpa now. Let's ask him."

"There are too many to plant them all," said grandpa, "but you can each plant five. The place where Ainslee had his garden last year, I had spaded up yesterday, and you can stick them in there."

The seven children flocked into the garden, and grandpa, after watching them a few minutes, went on down to the meadow.

"What will we do when they've grown up to be big bean-vines?" said Amanda. "There'll be lots o' beans on 'em."

"I don't know," said Ainslee. "Divide 'em, maybe."

"That wouldn't be any fun," said Jack. "I tell you: plant some corn too, and when they're both ripe enough, cook 'em somehow, and we'll all eat 'em up."

"I'll see what mamma says," said Ainslee. "Let's go and look at the pigeons now."

When the afternoon ended, and the children went in to tea, hungry as if there had been no dinner in the dépôt, Ainslee told his mother about the beans.

"Jack's idea is a good one," said mamma. "I planted some corn and beans once when I was a little girl, and had a succotash party in the summer-house when they ripened. Dolly cooked it for me, and I made some biscuit myself to eat with it."

"I wish ours was going to be ripe right away," said Ainslee. "You have to wait such a while for everything."

"Perhaps Lizzie will learn how to make biscuit by that time," said mamma, "and if she comes over then, you can have a party where everything for it has been prepared by yourselves."

Whether the corn and beans grew, and the biscuit were made, and the party came off or not, you must, to find out, do as Ainslee did, — wait awhile.

XVI.

LAND AND SEA FLOWERS.

"WHERE do you think your cap is, Ainslee?" said mamma, coming in from the garden.

"Here," said Ainslee, putting his hand on the Scotch cap which lay by his side on the floor.

"Not that one," said mamma; "your old winter one which you wore last week."

"I don't know," said Ainslee. "Isn't it upstairs?"

"Think a minute," said mamma. "Can't you remember? Go out to the Canada plum-tree, and you will see. I will go too."

"That's nice," said Ainslee, jumping up delighted. "You don't ever take a walk with me hardly, mamma. Will you go 'way down with me into the meadow?"

"Perhaps," said mamma, as they walked out toward the plum-tree, which stood at the very back of the garden, overlooking the meadow and the mill-brook which wound through it. As they drew near the tree, a little bird flew out, and wheeled about their heads so closely, that it almost touched them.

"That's a wren," said Ainslee. "I shouldn't wonder if he's building a nest, mamma, he's so saucy; they're the sauciest birds that ever were, when they're building nests, papa says."

"I shouldn't, either," said mamma. "Look in the crotch of the tree, and see what you will see."

"Why, mamma!" screamed Ainslee, after a moment's examination. "It's my old cap, all full o' sticks an' straw, and the other wren's in it, fixing 'em."

Mrs. Wren flew out as he spoke, and seemed very much inclined to peck him, as he stood on tiptoe, to look into the cap, which was lodged securely in the fork of the tree, and screened by leaves so completely, that one who did not know, would hardly notice its being there.

"What'll I do, mamma?" said Ainslee, drawing back a step or two, as Mrs. Wren came nearer. "It would be too bad to spoil all the nest, wouldn't it? I don't believe the wren will let me take the cap away, anyhow."

"You need not try her," said mamma. "The cap shall stay there; only — who left it there in the first place?"

"I guess it was me," Ainslee said, turning a little red, "when I was playing 'I spy' with Tommy and Sinny. My head got all hot, and

I took my cap off and put it in there, when I was behind the tree. Why can't I have my hair cut off short, mamma, close to my head, the way Tommy had his last summer? I've got lots more'n I want."

"You may, when hot weather is really here," said mamma. "Now, let us go away from here, else the wren may stop building. I hope pussy will not find their new house."

"I guess she won't," said Ainslee, as they walked on toward the meadow. "I'll bring crumbs every day, and maybe they'll get to know me real well. There's a sparrow down at the foot o' the sweet-apple-tree, right in among the suckers, an' there's four little eggs in the nest. Pussy will get *her*, any way. Stop and look at my garden, mamma. I'm going to have lots o' things."

"Lots o' things" had certainly started. The beans, planted two or three weeks before, were growing nicely; and Lizzie, before going home, had put in a row of peas near them, the delicate green leaves of which were just peeping through the ground. The largest bed showed only some carrots and two onions, which were sending out long sprouts.

"There's corn and potatoes in there, where you don't see anything but the carrots," said Ainslee;

"lots of 'em, and grandpa's goin' to pay me for all the seed on those onions. I planted all my date seeds down there, an' some lemon seeds too. Maybe I'll have lemonade, Fourth o' July."

"Very likely you will," said mamma, smiling, "but, I am afraid, not from your own trees. Hark! what is that noise from the house?"

"It sounds like Ponto," said Ainslee; "only grandpa gave Ponto away. Baby 's crying, too. Let's go right in and see what it is."

Mamma hurried in, and found Mr. Parker in the parlor with grandma, who was holding baby in her lap, while a small brown spaniel frisked about the room, and, as Ainslee came in, jumped up on him, and licked his face; and then, catching hold of his trousers, began biting, and growling, and shaking, so that Ainslee could not stand still one minute.

"What a dog!" said Ainslee, sitting down on the floor. "Is he yours, Mr. Parker?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Parker, "but I rather think he belongs to somebody else. The truth is," he added, turning to Ainslee's mother, "two of them are more then I can manage, and I thought that as Ponto had gone, you might like to fill his place. Rover can easily be trained to better manners, and he is so affectionate that Ainslee will like to be his owner."

"Me!" said Ainslee, almost falling backwards in astonishment. "A whole dog, all for me!"

"Half for you and half for baby, if you like that better," said Mr. Parker, laughing. "Though after treating baby so when he first came in, I'm afraid he will not be in favor for a long time."

"What did he do?" asked Ainslee, stroking Rover, who had cuddled down at his feet.

"Baby was sitting on the floor," said Mr. Parker, "playing with grandma's button-box, and Rover thought, I suppose, that he was there expressly to be played with, and licked and nosed him so hard, that poor Bertie fell over sideways, and the more he cried the more Rover pulled him about, till grandma came to the rescue. You must teach him to be gentler, if you can, provided mamma lets you keep him."

"What do *you* think, grandma?" said mamma.

"He'll plague our lives out," said grandma, "and the old cat won't have a minute's peace when he's in the house; but I suppose we'll have to keep him."

Ainslee, who had been looking anxiously at her, began a dance about the room, followed by Rover, but stopped as Mr. Parker said, —

"I came to call on you to-day, Ainslee, and Rover is only part of what I have to talk about. What do you say to coming down and taking tea

with me this afternoon, and looking at something new I have at home?"

"Oh how nice!" said Ainslee, with shining eyes, and looking at mamma. "I may, mayn't I, mamma?"

"Yes," said mamma. "That is, if you are not too much trouble to Mr. Parker."

"I don't trouble you, do I?" said Ainslee. getting very close to him. "Shall I come real early?"

"By four o'clock," said Mr. Parker; "and I will walk home with you after tea."

Ainslee whisked into the kitchen to tell Sinny, whose voice he heard there; and Mr. Parker, after talking a few moments longer, took his leave. Ann stood by the kitchen fire, stirring something, and pussy, who had led a very quiet life since Ponto's departure, lay curled up under the stove, dreaming dreams of Mouseland. Rover rushed at her the moment he saw her, and pussy, slowly opening her eyes, spit, and raised her back as she saw who had broken up her nap, and at least boxed Rover's nose so sharply, as it came too near, that he drew back, and contented himself with barking loudly. Pussy retired backwards till she reached the sink, and then springing to it, seated herself behind the water-pail, and looked at him over the top.

"She'll hold her own," said Ann. "But I'd like to know what dog that is, rampaging into the kitchen like that? You needn't think I'll have a dog round under my feet every minute."

"He won't be under your feet," said Ainslee. "He'll be out-doors 'most all the time, 'cept when he has some dinner. You're going to be real good to him, Ann, I know."

"Well, he is sort of pretty," said Ann, who really liked dogs a good deal better than cats, and was, on the whole, glad to see Rover. "If he wasn't, I'd just say pat, he shouldn't ever come into this kitchen. You've got to keep him out when it's wet, any way, Ainslee."

"Well, I will," said Ainslee, sitting down on the door-step to tell Sinny all about it, while Rover ran over to the wood-house, and down the cellar-way, smelling everywhere, as if to make up his mind about his new quarters.

"Stephen Jones is 'most the only boy that's got a dog," said Sinny, "unless it is Samp, an' Samp's only a yaller dog, that don't know nothin'. Won't Tommy be tickled when he sees Rover?"

"I guess he will," said Ainslee. "There's your wagon, ain't it, Sinny? I wonder if mamma would let us take baby in it."

"We never did, did we?" said Sinny. "Let's ask her right away."

Mamma hesitated a little when she heard the request, but Ainslee promised to be ten times as careful as nurse was, when she took him in his own wagon; so, finally, a cushion was put in the bottom, and little Herbert seated on it, so delighted that he could hardly sit still.

"Bertie must hold on all the time," said mamma, kissing his red lips, and the children started off around the garden, Rover running before them.

"I wish we had reins," said Ainslee, "and then baby could drive us. I'm going to ask mamma to make some; two pair, maybe, an' then when Tommy comes down, we could have a double team, and two could ride to time in the wagon. It's plenty big if you let your legs hang out. My father's coming home. Did you know it, Sinny?"

"No," said Sinny. "When?"

"Not for a good while," said Ainslee. "But he said in mamma's letter, he'd be here before the Fourth o' July."

"Then you'll have fire-works, won't you?" said Sinny. "Let's run with baby."

The garden walks were hard and smooth; the little wagon rolled easily, and baby squealed with delight as the children ran around the different beds. Breath went at last, and they sat down,

panting, on the bank, in the cool grass, to rest for a few minutes.

"There's Stars o' Bethlehem over there, — lots of 'em," said Ainslee, presently. "And there's some blood-root too. Let's pick a lot, and I'll put some o' my carrot leaves with 'em. Mamma says carrot leaves is 'most the prettiest things there is to put with flowers."

Baby looked on while they picked; and when, after a time, mamma came out, he was playing with grass and leaves which Sinny piled into the wagon, while Ainslee had two little bouquets of the delicate white flowers and feathery green carrot leaves.

"My hands are all over blood-root juice," he said. "See mamma, one's for you, and can't I take one to Mr. Parker?"

"Yes," said mamma. "It is time now to get ready: almost half-past three. Sinny can go part way with you, if his mother is willing."

"She wants me to get some 'lasses," said Sinny, "so I can go 'most all the way. Can't I play with baby till he's ready?"

"Yes," said mamma; "that will be very soon, and baby is having such a nice time, that he may stay till I call you. But bring him in, if he cries."

Sinny felt full six feet tall, as Mrs. Barton walked away with Ainslee, for he had never be-

fore been trusted with anybody's baby. Bertie looked a little doubtful, and called "mamma" once, but Sinny began to draw him about the garden very fast indeed, till he laughed, and squealed, and cried loudly for "More, more lide!" when mamma called, and he was taken into the house.

"I guess you've got some good grease on your head," said Sinny, as they walked along. "You smell first-rate."

"No I haven't," said Ainslee. "It's cologne on my hands; or else, maybe, this rose grandma gived me. Mamma says it isn't nice to put grease on your hair, 'cause it dirties your caps, and the pillow, and everything. Did you know there was something just like oil, down at the bottom of every single hair, Sinny? and mamma says, if you brush your hair lots, it comes out and makes it shine ever so much nicer'n if you put grease on it."

"I don't believe it," said Sinny. "There ain't none down to the bottom o' mine, anyway."

"No, I don't s'pose there is," said Ainslee; "'cause, you see, yours isn't just like hair, you know. There's the very goose that runned after us, I do believe, off on the pond. All the little gooses growed up, I guess; there's lots of 'em with him. Why, here comes Rover, an' I shut him up tight. Go home, Rover!"

Coax or scold as he would, Rover would not go home, but capered about; and when at last Ainslee threw a stick at him, he brought it back and laid it at his feet.

"Why, ain't that nice?" said Ainslee. "I didn't know he'd do that. Mr. Parker won't scold, I guess, if he does come. Anyway, I can't make him go home. Let's hurry."

Sinny said good-by at the store door, and Ainslee walked on, down the beautiful village street, under the great elms and maples, till he came to the cottage where Mr. Parker lived. Until this spring, his sister had been with him; but now she was away, and Randy Ripley, a tall woman, who had been in their family almost ever since Mr. Parker was a baby, took care of him and of the house. Randilla Aguba Ripley was her real name, so she had one day told Ainslee, but it would have taken a good deal of time to call her that always, and so it had been shortened into Randy.

Ainslee, who had been here a good many times, although I have not told you about it, ran in at the open door, and to Mr. Parker's study, just back of the parlor, and only separated from it by some heavy curtains falling from the arch between the two rooms. They were looped back now, as they always were when Mr. Parker was

not studying or writing; but he was not there, though an open book lay on the table, and the study chair was pushed back, as if some one had just got up from it. Ainslee looked across to the bow-window which Miss Agnes Parker had always kept filled with flowers, and screamed with pleasure as he did so. What do you think he saw? The globe of gold-fish which had always stood on the little round table in the window? No indeed; but a beautiful aquarium, with glass sides and marble bottom, filled with waving water-plants, through which the fish darted; and on one stone in the corner of it, something which looked like a lovely pink flower, with long leaves swaying back and forth.

"Oh, oh, oh!" screamed Ainslee, and Randy looked in at the study door, to see who was making such a noise.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said she, smiling, for Ainslee was one of the few children she liked. "That is pretty, isn't it? Mr. Parker's just gone to the office, and he'll be back in a few minutes. You come out an' see me, or you can look at that, just as you're a mind to."

"I'll look at this," said Ainslee. "It's the beautifullest thing I ever did see. Is that a real flower in there, Randy?"

"I guess it is," said Randy, "but I don't just

rightly know; you ask Mr. Parker, an' he'll tell you all about it;" and Randy shut the door, and went back to her work. Ainslee heard the gate shut, and ran out to meet the minister, who came quickly in with some letters and papers in his hand.

"So you have come," he said, smiling at Ainslee. "What do you think of what you find here?"

"I'm 'most crazy," said Ainslee, "'cause everything's so pretty. Why, there are the flowers I brought you, on the floor! I picked all the white ones, Mr. Parker, and grandma gived me that pink rose and bud, to put right in the middle."

"They are beautiful," said Mr. Parker, "and I shall put them on the study table, where I can see them all the time."

Ainslee watched him as he poured some water into a vase, and put the delicate flowers in it, and then pulled him to the window.

"Now tell me all about the fish," he said, "and that flower down there. Is it truly a flower?"

"Yes and no," said Mr. Parker. "It is a flower in shape and color, and name too, for it is called a Sea-anemone, and it never stirs from the stone any more than a flower would; yet it is alive, and if you could look at it through my

large microscope, you would see that it has a mouth which opens and shuts, as if it were eating. They are of many colors; purple, and pale yellow, and pink like this, and sometimes pure white. Don't you think the sea has a beautiful flower-garden of its own?"

"I should think it had," said Ainslee. "Oh, look a there! There's a little thing with a head just like a horse. Why, I never saw such things. Where did they come from?"

"A friend sent them to me from Boston," said Mr. Parker, "and took very great pains to have them get here in good order. The plants will keep the water in the aquarium fresh and good for a long time, he said, and he sent, at the same time, a barrel of sea-water, from which to fill this up. The fish will do very well; but whether my beautiful flower, and the little sea-horse will live, I do not know. There's a little crab in there under the stones, and those two little fish close by are sticklebacks; they build a nest for themselves, and the baby sticklebacks live in it. Now I am going to read my letters, and by and by I will tell you some more about the fish."

Mr. Parker sat down at his table, and Ainslee watched for a long time, hoping that the crab would come out; but he did not till the letters

were finished, and Mr. Parker poked him out with a little stick. Then they talked for a long time about the fish, until Randy opened the door and said tea was ready, and they went out to find a small round table set for two. Rover was in the dining-room when they went in, and sat by Mr. Parker's chair, just as if he had a perfect right to be there.

"So you've come home again, old fellow," said Mr. Parker, patting him. "Did you invite him to come with you, Ainslee?"

"I shutted him up tight as I could," said Ainslee. "But he would get out, an' he came after me when I was 'most here, and wouldn't go home."

"He wanted to see Frisk, perhaps," said Mr. Parker, sitting down at the tea-table. "Frisk is in disgrace because he scratched up my flower seeds, and I have tied him up in the wood-shed. We'll call on him after tea."

Mr. Parker poured tea, and Ainslee had some in his cup of milk, and ate biscuit and butter, and custard, and little cup-cakes, till he could eat no more.

Then they went into the garden together, to see all the green things growing; and after they had walked about a little while, Mr. Parker said he had not told Ainslee his story yet, and they

went back to the study, stopping a moment on the way to see Frisk, who whined and stood up on his hind-legs, begging to be untied.

"Rover may stay with you awhile," said Mr. Parker, "and tell you what he has been doing to-day."

"I guess he will," said Ainslee. "Just see 'em put their noses together. They are talking, aren't they?"

"Very likely, after their own fashion," said Mr. Parker. "Now for the story, Ainslee."

Beautiful stories Mr. Parker told; sometimes his own, sometimes other people's, and he began to-night a very long one he had read in a book, called "The Snow Queen," and Ainslee listened to the very end, where Gerda, after long wanderings, finds little Kay in the Snow Queen's palace, and brings him home again. Some of you little people who read "Riverside," perhaps have that book of Hans Andersen's, where you can find this story, and hosts of other beautiful ones, for he loves all children, and writes for them wonderful tales you would all like to read, and many of which, by this time, Ainslee knew very well.

"She loved him ever so, didn't she?" said Ainslee, after a little silence, "to go 'way off in the snow and everything, to find him, after he had gone away. She was little when she started,

an' she was all growed up when she found him. It's a be-yutiful story."

"Yes," said Mr. Parker, as if thinking of something else, and taking a letter from his pocket. "Who is this, Ainslee?" he added after a moment, putting a photograph into his hand.

"It's my Cousin Grace," said Ainslee, quickly, — "my Cousin Grace that was up here last summer. Do you know her, Mr. Parker? That's mamma's picture, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't mamma's picture," said Mr. Parker, "and I do know her very well; so well, that she has promised to come here in the autumn and live with me always."

"And never go away?" said Ainslee. "Won't she get tired o' being with you all the whole time?"

"I hope not," said Mr. Parker, laughing a little; "though she might, perhaps, if I did not love her very much indeed, and want her to be happy all the time. She will be Cousin Grace Parker, by and by, instead of Cousin Grace Alison, and you will be my little cousin then."

"Is she going to marry you, just as mamma did papa?" asked Ainslee. "Mamma telled me about it one day, an' she said when I was a big man, I should love somebody too, most of all, and be married, maybe. Mamma says love is the best thing in the whole world."

"Mamma is right," said Mr. Parker, drawing Ainslee to him. "You are a little fellow now, Ainslee, but quite old enough to know that. God's name is Love, and loving is the best and sweetest thing He ever gives us to do. Never be ashamed of it all your life long, for the more you love here, the more you will have to be glad of when you go home to heaven."

"I love you," said Ainslee, putting his head on Mr. Parker's shoulder, "and I'm glad you're going to be my cousin."

"So am I, ever so glad," said Mr. Parker. "But the sun has gone down, and mamma will wonder why we do not come. Say good-by to Randy, and call Rover, and we will start."

"Come an' see *me* some day," said Randy, as he went into the kitchen, "some time when Mr. Parker's too busy to have you, an' maybe I'll tell you somethin' about when I was a little gal."

"That'll be nice," said Ainslee. "I'll come pretty soon, Randy; maybe to-morrow."

"Well," said Randy, opening the door to let Rover in, and Ainslee went out to Mr. Parker, who stood by the gate, waiting. The sun had set, but a red glow filled the air, and rested on the quiet river. One or two birds twittered from the tall trees as they passed under them, but the evening silence was settling down, hardly

broken by a sound, till they reached the busy part of the village, where the stores were. Once beyond them, they felt it again, all through the winding road which led to Grandpa Walton's.

Tommy and Amanda were in the front yard playing, as they went by Mr. Martin's, and Mr. Parker stopped to talk to them for a moment, and then passed on. The red light faded into soft, gray twilight while they walked, and the sound of mamma's organ came to them through the trees, as they went in at grandpa's gate, and through the winding paths, up the hill on which the house stood. The doors and windows were all open, for the night was warm and clear, and grandma and grandpa sat in the old parlor by the window, while mamma played.

Ainslee curled up on the sofa, listening for a while to the music: then his eyes shut, the heavy little head fell against Mr. Parker's shoulder, who put his arm about him, and laid him softly down, and Ainslee was in dreamland.

He did not know that, by and by, Mr. Parker carried him up-stairs; he hardly knew when nurse pulled off his clothes and laid him in his own little bed; and when the bright sun, shining into his eyes, waked him next morning, he had to rub them very hard indeed before he could quite make up his mind where he was.

Baby was wide awake too, playing with his black doll Andy, which went to bed with him every night. Ainslee climbed into mamma's bed and pulled baby in after him, and a wonderful frolic began, which did not end till nurse came after both of them. After breakfast, Ann made cookies, and Ainslee, who liked to have a piece of dough quite as well as any little girl, begged some from her, and cut out a whole panful of little cakes with grandma's largest thimble. They burned a little in the oven, but that made no difference, and he ate all but one, which he gave to baby before mamma saw what he was doing.

"I am going to the woods back of the mill-pond," said mamma after dinner, "and there is such a good road all the way, that I think we will take baby, and let nurse have a holiday. Do you want to go, Ainslee?"

"I guess I do," said Ainslee, jumping about; "me and Rover too."

"Ask grandpa for the trowel," said mamma, "and we will dig some roots of sweet, white violets to bring home."

Ainslee brought the trowel and a basket for flowers, and as soon as baby was ready, they set off. For a little way, as they came to the turn by Sugar Loaf Hill, the road was sandy, and baby something of a load to pull through it.

As they went on, it grew firmer, and very soon the mill-pond, almost a lake, lay before them, shining under the sun, and the mountain so clearly reflected in it, that Ainslee said he was sure he saw a squirrel running up one of the trees on the mountain side. Near the dam, a path led off into the woods, and after following this for a time, mamma stopped, and sat down on an old log under a tree.

"There are the violets," she said, and Ainslee, looking where she pointed, saw one little shady spot quite white with them.

"Year after year, they grow in this one spot," mamma went on, "and year after year, ever since I was a little girl, I have carried them home with their own native earth about them, and put them in shady places, where I was sure they would thrive, but they never did."

"What makes you dig 'em up to-day, then, mamma?" Ainslee asked.

"Only to keep a few of them fresh a little while," said mamma, "so that I can enjoy their sweetness at home. I shall never try any more to make them grow. If they did, they would be wild flowers no longer, and perhaps the charm would go."

"It's nicer to come after 'em," said Ainslee. "See how baby looks up at the trees. He was

never in the woods before, was he? Let him get out, mamma, and walk a little speck."

"Just a very little," said mamma, "while I get the violets;" and she set baby on the ground, who hardly knew what to make of it, and lifted his feet very high over every little stick and stone in the way, as he walked. Rover whisked through the bushes, looking for woodchucks, perhaps, and by and by mamma lifted baby back to his carriage, and they turned toward home.

"I'm glad I ain't dead," said Ainslee. "It's nice to be alive."

"Very nice indeed," said mamma. "It is a beautiful world to be in, and the longer you live, the more you will find in it to enjoy."

"Nurse says it's a world o' troubles," said Ainslee, kicking a stick from the path, "an' she says I shall have an awful lot of 'em."

"I hope not an 'awful lot,'" mamma answered, smiling. "You will have some, perhaps a good many, for we all do; but the dear Father in heaven never sends more than we can bear; and if we are patient through them, they all turn to blessings. Nurse has had a great many in her life, and borne them very bravely; some day, perhaps, she may, when you are older, tell you about them."

"She said she would," said Ainslee. "There's

a lot o' things everybody's goin' to tell me when I'm older. I wish I was older now."

"You are coming to it very fast," said mamma, as they went in at the gate. "My little Ainslee is growing taller all the time. Pretty soon he will be gone, and there will be a big Ainslee, as tall as Uncle Ainslee, maybe, and Bertie will be big too. What shall I do without my little boys?"

"Big ones will be nicer," said Ainslee, "for they won't tear their clothes, and keep plaguing you all the time; an' I'll love you harder an' harder, mamma, the bigger I get."

"That's good," said mamma, stopping at the door for a great hug. "Now let us take care of the violets; and then, after you have read to me, I will finish the story I began yesterday morning."

XVII.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS.

School had begun again the first Monday in June, and for nearly a fortnight Ainslee had gone steadily, half of each day, as usual. Two or three new boys and girls had come in; but as they ranked among the older ones, Ainslee had very little to do with them. Sampson, and Sinny, and he still sat on the same bench on the boys' side, and Amanda and little Sarah Jones on the girls', and everything went on just as if there had been no vacation. The old stove had been moved into the entry behind the door, and nobody thought of staying in now at recess or noon-time, unless kept in for bad lessons, but ate their dinners sitting on the log near the spring, or on the ground under the trees. The school-room windows were kept open through the middle of the day, though Miss Barrett threatened to have them nailed down if the children looked out so much, and Ainslee, for one, did his full share of this looking. In the great maple, near by, a robin had her nest; and it was a pleasant

change, when the spelling lesson grew tiresome, to look out and up, and watch for the mother or father bird to come flying home, with a bug or worm for the wide-open, never-satisfied mouths in the nest.

This particular morning about which I shall tell you, Ainslee found, when he ran out at recess, several boys gathered at the foot of the maple-tree, and among them one of the new ones, Charley Gibson, — a light, active boy, famous for climbing the tallest trees, and robbing nests wherever he found them, in order to make still longer the string of eggs which hung over the looking-glass in his mother's parlor.

"Shinny up quick," one of the boys was saying, as Ainslee ran up to them, "or you won't get down afore recess is done."

"What's he goin' to do?" Ainslee asked.

"He's after them robins," Stephen Jones answered. "He's goin' to raise them, he says, and sell 'em when they're big."

"Don't you do it," said Ainslee, earnestly, catching hold of Charley, who had just begun the climb.

"You let go! I'd like to know what business it is o' yourn?" said Charley, holding on tight. "Let go, I say."

"I won't," said Ainslee. "You sha'n't get

the poor little birds, an' make their mother cry. They're crying now, 'cause they think you're coming."

"Let 'em cry," said Charley. "I'll kick you, Ainslee Barton, if you don't let go."

Charley struck out as he spoke, but though the heavy boot-heel hit his forehead, Ainslee held on so tight, that Charley was forced to slide down to the ground.

"Do you want me to pummel you all to bits?" he began, seizing Ainslee, and shaking him. "There's the skin off on your forehead, an' serves you right, too! Here you've held on to me, till I hain't got time to go up an' back afore the bell rings. I'm a good mind as ever was to lick you, if you wasn't so little."

"Lick away," said Ainslee, doubling his small fists, while Sampson, delighted, sung out, "Give it to him, Charley!"

"Who be you?" said Charley, turning suddenly on Sampson, who retired hastily. "I don't lick babies, and I won't lick him; but he ain't goin' to stop my gettin' the birds."

"Mamma says it's wicked to rob nests, after the birds have taken such pains to build 'em all nice," said Ainslee.

"'Tain't wicked," said Charley. "They steal cherries and everything, the whole time."

"Mamma says they eat more worms than they do cherries," Ainslee answered. "There's awful lots o' worms when people kill the birds. You wouldn't like somebody to come an' steal you from your father an' mother."

"O fuss!" said Charley. "Birds don't care. You'll get nests fast enough, when you stop being so fat you can't climb."

"I never will," said Ainslee. "I'll climb up, and just peek in to see how the eggs look, but I wouldn't take one away for nothin' at all."

"Well, *I* would," said Charley. "There's the bell this very minute. If I don't pay you some time!"

Ainslee went in, hoping that Charley would make up his mind to let the birds alone, and sat down to his spelling lesson. Miss Barrett looked sharply at the black spot near his eye, as he came to the class, but said nothing, though Sampson watched eagerly, hoping she would accuse him of having been fighting. Noon came, and Ainslee ran out to the maple-tree, too excited about the birds to think of eating his luncheon. Charley looked a little dubious as he saw him standing there.

"You go off, young 'un," he said. "Maybe I sha'n't get no more birds after these."

"Don't get these; please to don't," begged

Ainslee, while Amanda came near, just ready to cry, if things went wrong. "I'll give you my barrel if you won't."

"I don't want your barrel," said Charley. "Why, there's a man goin' to give me half a dollar apiece for every one o' these birds I raise. Out o' the way now," and Ainslee was pushed aside, while Charley climbed fast as he could to the top of the tree. The parent birds flew about uttering sharp cries, and a pair of robins in another tree joined them, as if afraid their turn would come next.

Ainslee watched, till Charley, holding the nest carefully in one hand, had almost reached the ground again.

"You're a bad, wicked boy," he shouted then, bursting into tears. "You're a thief!" and he started on a run for home, followed for a little way by Amanda, who wanted to comfort him, but not running as fast as he, could not catch up in time, and so had to walk back again.

"I wouldn't get the dear little birds," she said, with her eyes full of tears. "You're an awful boy, Charley Gibson."

"What a row all about nothin'," said Charley, starting for home with the nest in his hand, but thinking to himself, as he heard the cries of the old robins, that perhaps they did care more than

he had thought, and maybe he wouldn't get any more nests for a good while.

Ainslee in the mean time went on, running at first, and then, as he grew tired, walking, till he came to grandpa's gate. Mamma was coming slowly down the winding paths, and Ainslee ran to meet her, crying again.

"Why, what is the matter?" said she, taking hold of his hand. "Have you been fighting, Ainslee? Your eye is all black."

"No, that's only a hit," said Ainslee. "But Charley Gibson stole a whole nest full o' little robins, an' wouldn't stop, and the mother cried every minute."

"Too bad! too bad!" said mamma. "I wish no bird need ever be stolen again. God never meant them to be shut up in cages, and robins will be almost sure to die. All our birds here are safe, at any rate."

"I wish all of 'em, everywhere, would come here," Ainslee said. "I wish all our birds would tell the others, so't they needn't ever go near the school-house."

"Perhaps some of them have been told," said mamma. "For certainly we have more and more here every year. Do you know that our little wrens are learning to fly? I have just come from the nest, and Mrs. Wren was as busy as possible; come and see."

Ainslee ran on by mamma to the garden and the Canada plum-tree, where Mrs. Wren, sitting on a twig, did not stir as they drew nearer, but, grown familiar from many such visits, only put her head a little one side, and looked at them with her bright eyes, and then turned all her attention to the little wrens, who were half flying, half hopping, from one twig to another. Ainslee watched them till the dinner-bell rang, and then went in, with another sigh for the poor robins, who would never fly through the trees again.

"I wish my aqualium had glass sides, so't my fishes could see out," he said, after dinner. "Don't you s'pose they're lonesome, mamma?"

"They might like it better if they could see out," said mamma, "though fishes know so little, that I don't think they are troubled at being shut up. If it seems to you, though, that they are, you can put them back in the brook."

"My two shiners have been there ever an' ever so long," said Ainslee, — "ever since last summer. The pollywogs don't care, I know, 'cause the water in my aqualium isn't half so dirty as the puddle I got 'em in, an' the turtles don't either. Maybe the shiners do. I guess I'll put 'em back."

"Well," said mamma, "I hear Sinny's voice in the yard, and you can go together if you like."

Ainslee ran out presently, to find Sinny playing with Rover, and went on to the little house in the barn-yard, about which you all know.

"What you goin' to do with that tin pail?" Sinny called, running after him.

"Take my shiners home," said Ainslee. "I ain't ever going to keep any more till I've got a real, true Aqualium, with glass sides, just like Mr. Parker's, so 't they can see out every minute."

"They don't care, I don't believe," said Sinny, as Ainslee tried to dip them up.

"I do, if they don't," said Ainslee. "I won't ever have any more things shut up where they can't get out, unless I know, certain sure, they don't care. Oh dear! I can't get but one shiner to time, an' the biggest pollywog keeps getting in, an' every time I tip him out, the shiner tips out too."

"Pull him out by his tail," said Sinny, "an' I'll get a dipper, and pour the other shiner right into the pail."

"Well," said Ainslee, and Sinny ran in for a dipper, with which they by and by ladled out shiner number two, and started for the mill brook, Rover running before them.

"There's where we got 'em," said Sinny, pointing to the shallow spot where they had

sailed pea pods nearly a year before. "You goin' to put 'em back in the very same place?"

"I guess so," said Ainslee. "Maybe they remember it, an' maybe some o' these here are their relations."

Ainslee tipped the pail; out went the water, and the shiners with it, and the little shallow, alive a moment before with their "relations," was left quite empty; not one there.

"They all swimmed away together," said Ainslee, "so I don't know whether mine was glad or not. I guess they was. What piece you going to speak Friday, Sinny?"

"I ain't goin' to speak none," said Sinny, sitting on the bank. "We littlest ones don't have to. I don't know none."

"I know we don't *have* to," said Ainslee. "But Miss Barrett said we might, if our mothers had time to teach us. I 'most know one now, an' I'm going to get mamma to read it to me till I *all* do. I can read some of it myself—'most all. I know some of another, an' I'll teach it to you if you want me to, Sinny."

"I do' known as I do," said Sinny. "What is it?"

"It's real short," Ainslee answered, sitting down by him. "I can say it right off: —

"'One thing at a time,
And that done well,
Is a very good rule, —
So I have heard tell.
All that you do,
Do with your might;
Things done by halves
Are never done right.'

You want to learn it?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Sinny. "Say it slow, though," and Ainslee repeated it, line by line, till Sinny knew it quite well.

"You say it to me every day till Friday," said Ainslee, "so's to know it perfect, an' you must n't say, — 'So I have *hearn* tell.' You must say, — 'So I have *heard* tell.'"

"'So I have *heard* tell,'" repeated Sinny. "Now, what's yourn?"

"Oh, mine's in a book," said Ainslee, "an' it's about stealing birds; and I'm going to look right at Charley Gibson when I say it. You'll hear it Friday."

"Tell me now," said Sinny; but Ainslee would not, and at last Sinny went home provoked. By next morning, however, he was quite ready to make up, and to tease again; but Ainslee was firm, and only mamma and Amanda, I think, knew exactly what he was going to say, till Friday came.

Friday afternoon was the time for speaking

pieces, and Ainslee did not go till noon of that day, in order not to get tired. The older boys finished their pieces at last, and Miss Barrett was about to call the conduct roll, when Ainslee held up his hand.

"Me an' Sinny 's got pieces too," he said.

"Well," said Miss Barrett, "make your bow, and say them, then."

Ainslee stepped forward, faced the scholars, and made his bow, a little frightened, now that the time had really come; and then, fixing his eyes on Charley Gibson, repeated, in quite a loud voice, and with wonderful emphasis, these verses: —

"'If ever *I* see,
On bush or *tree*,
Young birds in a pretty *nest;*
I'll not in *my* play,
Steal those birds *away*,
To grieve *their mother's* breast.

"'*My* mother, I *know*,
Would sorrow *so*,
Should *I* be stolen away ;
So I'll speak to the birds
In my *softest words*,
Nor *harm* them in my play.'"

Charley first laughed a little, and then colored as he went on; and as Ainslee kept his eyes steadily on him, raised his desk-lid at last, and stayed behind that till they ended.

"Very well," said Miss Barrett, as Ainslee sat down, "very well indeed. Now, Sinny."

Sinny stumbled at the second verse, and had to be prompted by Ainslee, but got through safely, and sat down, looking rather miserable.

"Say that again next Friday," said Miss Barrett, "and then you'll know it perfect."

Charley Gibson shook his fist at Ainslee as they went out after school, but as he laughed at the same time, could not have meant much harm. Whether he made up his mind to —

> "Speak to the birds
> In his softest words,
> Nor harm them in his play,"

ever after this, I do not know; but I do know that, when another year came, the robins built safely in the great maple, though Charley still went to school.

Monday noon, Ainslee came running home in great excitement.

"Always ready to fly out o' your skin about something or other," said Ann, as he went through the kitchen. "What's goin' on now?"

"It's a new store," said Ainslee, running right into grandpa, who had started for a walk in the garden, and was coming slowly out.

"Come, come!" said grandpa. "If there is

a new store, I don't want to turn a somerset down the back steps. Whose store is it?"

"It's Jim Field's," said Ainslee. "Don't you know, grandpa? Sinny says he's his mother's second cousin, an' he hasn't got but one leg. He's got all kinds o' candy, an' nuts, and figs, and everything."

"So much the worse for the school-children," said grandpa, walking on. "You eat yourselves sick with trash, as it is."

"I don't ever," said Ainslee. "Mamma won't let me. Where is mamma?"

"Up-stairs," said Ann, and Ainslee tumbled up.

"Come stiller, dear," said mamma, as he went into her room. "One would think it was a cannon-ball bumping up the stairs, instead of a little boy. What is the hurry?"

"Only to tell you about the store, mamma," said Ainslee, — "the new store."

"I heard what you told grandpa," said mamma. "Where is this famous new store?"

"Why, it's close to the school-house," said Ainslee, jumping up and down. "Don't you know that little speck of a house, mamma, after you've gone by Mr. Martin's? Well, Jim Field is going to live in the back room, and have store in the front. He's got pins, an' thread, an' her-

rings, an' everything, 'cause I saw 'em in the corner, an' Sinny says he's going to have candy and all. Mamma!"

"Well," said mamma.

"I wish I had some money," Ainslee went on.

"What would you do with it?" mamma asked.

"I'd buy a fig for Amanda," said Ainslee, planting both elbows in mamma's lap, and looking up into her eyes. "An' for me too. I love 'em. Why can't I have some pennies every week, like Jack? Two, maybe."

"Two would not be a great many," said mamma, smiling. "I think I can say 'Yes' to that."

"All the whole time?" said Ainslee. "Every single Monday morning?"

"Yes," said mamma; "you will never make yourself sick on what two pennies will buy. In fact, I had thought of *three*; with three, you and Amanda, and Sinny too, can have fine times. Will you have it in pennies or currency, sir?"

"Pennies," said Ainslee, "and then I can spend one a day, till they're every one gone. O you sweetest mamma!"

Sweetest mamma returned the hug which almost choked her, and then went on with her sewing, while Ainslee thumped down-stairs again, to tell grandpa and Ann of his good fortune.

So it came to pass, that when Jim Field had

settled down at housekeeping in the back room, and the needles, and pins, and herrings which Ainslee had seen, and the candy and nuts he had not seen, were arranged on shelves in the front one, he found very excellent customers in the school-children. A brisk demand for slate pencils and licorice stick began at once, and every spare penny among them found its way into the little cash drawer. Sinny, who had no money, called often, and stayed long, hoping that he would be treated in a cousinly way, and perhaps receive a handful of nuts, or a stick of candy; but Jim had either forgotten their relationship, or did not want to remember it, and day after day Sinny went home empty-handed.

Ainslee's first three pennies had given him a great deal of trouble. Mamma had handed them to him at once, not waiting for next Monday to come, and he had gone off in the highest spirits, fully intending to treat both Amanda and Sinny. One stick of candy seemed so small, that Ainslee, after buying it, looked about dissatisfied, seeking for something which should make more show. Peanuts and raisins seemed the most desirable things, and yet one penny must be saved for another day. It would never do to spend all three at one time.

"Well," said Jim Field, seeing his hesitation, "do you want anything else?"

"I'll take half a cent's worth o' peanuts, and half a cent's worth o' raisins," said Ainslee, forced to decide, and laying his second penny on the counter.

"Well, I'll do it for once," said Jim, "but I couldn't again. 'Tain't no way to trade. Don't you tell any o' the others I let you have 'em," and Jim handed Ainslee a dozen or so peanuts, and four raisins.

"I've got one more penny," said Ainslee, "but I don't want to spend that till to-morrow."

"All right," said Jim. "There's your bell; hurry along," and Ainslee ran on, putting his purchases at the very bottom of his pocket, lest he should be tempted to eat them.

At recess Sampson was tried by seeing Amanda and Sinny, seated on the log near the spring, and enjoying peppermint stick, while Ainslee divided the peanuts. Thirteen there proved to be, and this odd peanut and raisin he hardly knew what to do with.

"You ought to eat 'em," said Amanda. "You bought the whole."

"I'd give 'em to Samp, if he wasn't so mean," said Ainslee. "I'll eat the peanut, I guess. No I won't. I'll chop the raisin into three pieces, and let's plant the peanut, after we've eaten the rest."

"Will it grow?" said Amanda.

"O' course it will," Ainslee answered. "We'll have all we want by'm by, and I can spend all the three pennies for raisins to eat with 'em."

So a hole was dug near the spring, and for many days they watched, expecting to see peanut leaves coming through the ground at any moment. Two good reasons prevented. In the first place, the peanut was a roasted one, and could not have grown under any circumstances; and in the second place, Sampson, having watched for a good chance, had dug it up, and eaten it with great relish, one day after school.

As time went on, Ainslee found three cents a week by no means enough money with which to do all the "treating" he wanted. Figs especially, used it up wonderfully fast, two for three cents being Mr. Field's rule; but one day in the village, an idea came.

"Charge it on my bill," said Mr. Walton, as he went out of the grocery.

"Charge it," repeated Ainslee. "What is 'charge it,' grandpa?"

"It means," said grandpa, "that I am not ready to pay now, and ask him to write down in his books that I owe him so much. I pay my bills once a month, because it is more convenient on some accounts to let them run that length of

time. Sometimes I have not money enough with me, and there are a good many reasons why charging is a good plan, though in almost all cases it is better to pay as you go. If I were a poor man, I would never run up a bill."

Ainslee walked on by grandpa, thinking so hard, he did not hear plainly what was said. Why should not he run up a bill at Jim Field's? Grandpa and grandma very often gave him pennies, and if he saved them all, Jim could be paid some time. Then it would be so nice to go in every day and get what he wanted. Ainslee grew quite excited thinking about it; and yet he had no desire to run home and tell mamma, as he almost always did, every new thought that came into his mind, and this might have shown him that there was something not quite right about it.

Next morning came, and Ainslee rushed off to school, stopping at Jim's on the way. Once in the store, his courage almost failed, but Jim looked very good-natured, and some fresh raisins in a box, too good to do without.

"Two cents' worth o' raisins," Ainslee said. "I haven't got any pennies this morning, but you can charge 'em, Jim," he added, as the little parcel was put in his hand.

Jim looked doubtful a moment, but being sure

that Grandpa Walton would see that the money was paid, said, "All right," and Ainslee started off to share the raisins, and think what a nice, easy way it was of getting them. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, for him, a gentleman who spent that evening at grandpa's took some bright, new scrip from his pocket-book, to show to grandpa, and seeing Ainslee looking on, gave him a five-cent one. Jim was paid next morning and three cents' worth of figs bought beside; and then, seeing some very nice looking molasses candy on the shelf, two cents more were spent for that, and charged on Jim's slate.

So matters went on; Ainslee paying when he had money, but never catching up with the bill, which grew and grew all the time; till one morning Jim, looking very serious, said, "I guess you don't know how much you owe me, do ye?"

"How much?" said Ainslee, beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

"Twenty-eight cents," Jim answered, "an' I want you to pay me right away. Does your gran'ther, or ma, know you got things without paying?"

"No," said Ainslee; "I'll pay you pretty soon," and he walked out of the little store, and down the road. The school bell was ringing, but he could not go there, and he went on till

he came to a turn in the road, which hid the school-house and the store, and then turning into a path which led through some woods, sat down on a stump and began to think. Twenty-eight cents! What would mamma say, and grandpa too, and how could he ever tell them? Suppose mamma would not pay, and Jim should get angry, and say he would send him to prison, as the druggist had done last summer? and at this dreadful thought, Ainslee dropped to the ground, and leaning his head against the stump, cried miserably.

"Why Ainslee, child, what is the trouble?" said a voice presently, and Ainslee looked up to see Mr. Parker standing close by, who in a moment sat down on the old stump, and put his arm about him.

"I don't want to tell," said Ainslee, choked with crying. "I want to run away, and never see anybody any more."

"That would not help it," said Mr. Parker, half smiling. "If you have done anything wrong, the only safe way is to tell it all to somebody who can help you to do right. Perhaps I can, now. Have you been quarreling very hard with somebody?"

"No, oh no!" said Ainslee. "I wish I had. It's ever so much badder than that."

"'Why, Ainslee, child, what is the trouble?' said a voice presently."
See page 300.

Little by little the whole story came out, and then Ainslee waited to hear what would be said about it.

"Pretty bad," said Mr. Parker; "but not so bad as it might be. The first thing, now, is to tell mamma; and the second, to find a way of paying the debt. Will you earn the money in some way, or will it be easier to ask mamma for it?"

"I'd rather earn it," said Ainslee, after a moment; "only I don't know any way."

"I do," said Mr. Parker, smiling brightly at him. "I have thought of a way, since I sat here, which would do it, in not so very long a time. Suppose, now, we walk on to grandpa's together. I was on my way there, when I saw you. You can tell mamma; and then I will ask her if you can earn the money in the way I have thought of."

"You're real good," said Ainslee, smiling through some tears which would still come. "I won't ever get anything charged again."

"No, I don't think you will," said Mr. Parker; "and if you do not, this morning's trouble may be one of the best things that ever happened to you. Running in debt to anybody, when you do not know you ever can pay them, is as bad as stealing, almost, though very few people think so."

"Why, what is the matter?" said mamma, surprised, as a few minutes later they walked into the parlor.

"A practical illustration of the horrors of debt," said Mr. Parker, smiling. "I think I hear Mr. Walton's voice in the dining-room, and while Ainslee talks to you for a little while, I will do my errand there, if you please."

"I am glad it is no worse," said mamma, when Ainslee, in a low voice, and with a very red face, had told his story. "But I hope my little boy will remember all his life, that getting into debt carelessly, with no means to pay, is a very mean thing to do. Earning the money to pay this one with, will be a better lesson than anything I can say to you, and Mr. Parker is very kind to help you in it."

"I don't know what he wants me to do," said Ainslee. "He's going to tell you himself."

"Hard work," said Mr. Parker, walking in. "Very hard work indeed. My little onion bed is full of weeds; and if I show you how, I think you can weed it for me nicely. You can come down for an hour every afternoon, if mamma is willing, and if you work well, I will give you — Well, I'll tell you what I'll give you when the work is done."

So, for several days, Ainslee went down regularly to Mr. Parker's, and weeded in the little

onion bed. Small as it was, it took him a good many hours, for stooping between the rows made his legs ache, and every few minutes he had to run out into the path to rest. He was a very small boy, you know, and every day added a few fresh weeds to the ground he had gone over, and made the old ones stronger, and harder to pull up. Randy wanted him to stay to tea every afternoon, but Mr. Parker said, "No: it would seem then too much like play, and the harder work Ainslee had, the more surely he would remember all the difficulties of getting into debt." At last, though, the afternoon came when Ainslee, standing before the bed, could not see a single weed in it, and ran in to call Mr. Parker, who left his writing, and came out at once.

"Bravely done!" he said, walking around the bed. "Not a weed there. You have worked like a Trojan, Ainslee; better than I had any thought you would; and now for the pay. Randy will see that your face and hands are clean, and then you can come into the study."

Randy washed the hot face and hands, and brushed his hair, giving him a hug as she ended, and then Ainslee ran in to Mr. Parker, who sat in his study chair, while on the table were a pile of bright pennies.

"Twenty-eight," said Ainslee, after he had

counted them, one by one. "Why, how nice! I can pay Jim on the way home, can't I? Twenty-eight's a lot. It's good I could earn 'em."

"You have earned more than the twenty-eight cents," said Mr. Parker. "More than you would understand, if I should tell you now. You have been taking in patience, and perseverance, and honor, as well as pennies; and though the twenty-eight are all I shall pay you, here is something else, which you can keep all your life, and which will make you remember this trouble, if you were ever inclined to forget it," and Mr. Parker put into his hands a large book bound in green.

"Oh!" said Ainslee, turning it over. "It's beautiful — pictures; lots of 'em; only the name's so big I can't read it."

"'Andersen's Stories,'" said Mr. Parker. "The book from which have come, 'The Ugly Duck,' and 'The Little Match Girl,' and the 'Snow Queen,' and all those stories you love so well. By another year you can read them yourself, almost all, I think, and till then mamma will read them for you. Now, you want to go right on, I suppose, and pay Jim. I'll put the book back in the paper, so you can carry it in good order."

Ainslee ran fast as he could, and dashed into Jim's store in such a hurry, that he came out

from the back room, wondering what had happened.

"I've got the twenty-eight cents," said Ainslee, letting them ring on the counter, "an' I ain't ever going to have any more things charged."

"Your ma let you have 'em, I suppose," said Jim, dropping them into the money drawer.

"No she didn't," said Ainslee. "I earned 'em," and he ran out again and toward home, stopping for a moment to tell Amanda, whom he saw in the front yard, that his troubles were over.

"I sha'n't have lots o' things to treat you with any more," he said; "and maybe you won't like me so much."

"Yes I will," said Amanda, hugging him. "I love you, anyway, 'cause you're nice. I don't care if you don't give me anything."

Ainslee went on, happy as possible, and found mamma in the summer-house.

"Jim's all paid," he said, jumping into her lap, "and I've got a beauty book, and I told Amanda, and she don't care if I don't give her things. I feel awful nice."

"Very nice, you mean," said mamma. "I'm glad you have had patience enough to earn the money, and papa will be glad, too, that you did not let any one else pay your debts."

"What lots I'll have to tell him when he

comes," said Ainslee, taking hold of mamma's hand as the tea bell rang, and they went in together. "I'll have to sit up late, ever so long, and talk all the time."

"You do something very like that now," said mamma, laughing, but thinking, as she looked down at the bright, eager face, that papa would be more than willing to listen, even if the sitting up were "ever so long."

XVIII.

ONE DAY.

Boom! Boom! went the old cannon on the common, and Ainslee sat up in bed suddenly, and rubbed his eyes. Baby, too, heard the sound, and turned in his little crib.

Boom! Boom! and Ainslee bounced out of bed, and ran to the open window of mamma's room. In the east the sun had just risen, and the white mist was still rolling up the mountain side. Half a second he looked—not at the mist, but at the thin blue wreath of smoke curling up among the trees, and then shouted,—"Fourth o' July's begun, mamma! Fourth o' July's begun!"

"Dear me!" said mamma, opening her eyes slowly. "Are you awake, Ainslee? Why, it is hardly five o'clock; and if you do not run back to bed, and go to sleep again, how can you keep awake this evening to see the fire-works?"

"Why, I'm big now, you know, mamma," said Ainslee. "Ever so much bigger'n I was last Fourth o' July. I could keep awake all the

time if I was a mind to. I couldn't go to sleep now, if I was to try."

"Play with baby, then, till nurse comes," said mamma, "and perhaps I can have another nap."

"Why, it's Fourth o' July!" said Ainslee, jumping up and down, as the bells began to ring, and the cannon boomed again. "You couldn't go to sleep again, mamma."

"No, I don't really think I could," mamma answered, as baby tumbled over the side of his crib into her bed, and sat with wide open eyes, listening to the unusual sounds: while Ainslee took a towel from the rack and waved it, shouting "Hurrah!" "Hullah!" baby repeated, as if he knew all about Fourth of July; and "Hulla!" he shouted again, as nurse, coming in, picked him up from the bed, and walked away with him.

"I hear grandpa down-stairs," said Ainslee, "and Ann's building the kitchen fire. I'm going to get dressed this minute."

"Well," said mamma. "Rest is over for to-day, it seems, and we will all dress. Remember, though, that grandma had a headache last night, and perhaps it is not well yet, so do not make too much noise."

"I never would do such a thing," answered Ainslee, whisking across the hall, to the room

where nurse was dressing baby. "O mamma! do come and look at Bertie. Ain't he a beautiful baby?"

"Very," said mamma, who had come to the door and stood there for a few minutes, looking in.

Bertie was in the same bath-tub into which Ainslee had put Sinny a year ago; his white little limbs shining through the cool water, and such a splashing and dashing going on, that nurse had stepped back, and was wiping her face on her apron.

"Let me get in with him!" said Ainslee. "Do let me get in with him, mamma. The tub's plenty big enough, an' I'll show him how to make an awful rain-storm."

"For the land's sake don't show him nothin' more," said nurse, beginning to take baby out in a hurry. "Every bit o' mischief he can, he does the very same as you. It's a mercy there's four years, 'most, between you; and he can't catch up in time to have two of you making me crazy to oncet."

"I won't make you crazy," said Ainslee. "It's Fourth o' July morning; mayn't I get in?"

"If nurse is willing," mamma said.

Nurse said nothing; but as Ainslee caught a very little smile in her eyes, and just curling the

corners of her mouth, he waited for no more words, but hopped into the tub at once, while baby sat quite still with pleasure for a moment, and then squealed louder than before.

"You can't stay but just five minutes," said nurse, "so you'd better make the most of it."

"I'm a-going to, right away," said Ainslee, and nurse walked back to the window, to escape the rain which began.

"I'm in a dreadful storm," said Ainslee. "Baby, you pour water, so, right on my head, an' I'll be running home. I'll thunder, too."

Baby, who understood perfectly, began to pour water from his fat hands, over Ainslee's head, fast as he could scoop it up, while Ainslee kicked about, and roared in a deep voice.

"I wish there was somebody to make lightning," he said, stopping for breath. "I think this is a beautiful storm."

"And I think nurse's eyes will make lightning pretty soon, if this kind of thing lasts," said grandpa, who had come softly up. "What is going on? Don't you mean to leave any water in the tub?"

"Nurse didn't tell me to," said Ainslee. "She don't care much, I guess. She's first-rate this morning, 'cause it's Fourth o' July. Grandpa, you know what you said you'd get."

"Do I?" said grandpa. "Well, after breakfast, perhaps, I'll try and remember how much I know, and whether I've got anything; but now I'm very sure I could not tell one word about anything, and I must go where grandma is, to compose my mind."

"Does her head ache?" asked Ainslee, suddenly remembering what mamma had said. "'Cause I forgot a little about not making much noise. I'll come down quick, and stroke it for her, if it does."

"No, she feels better," grandpa answered, "and she is in the garden, looking at her roses."

"That's nice! Hurry, baby!" Ainslee said, jumping into the great towel nurse held for him. "I'll rub myself real dry, nurse, while you do baby, an' maybe you'll bring him right out."

"Maybe your ma will," nurse answered. "But I've got to clear up all this muss you've made. There's water in every corner of the room, I do believe. It's a blessing there's oil-cloth on the floor, or it would be soaking right through into your grandma's room. I never did see such children." And nurse went on, half muttering, half laughing to herself, while Ainslee rolled into his clothes in mamma's room, and went out to the garden.

Grandma's plants, which in winter entirely

filled one side of the great, sunny parlor, were, through the warm weather, moved to the south side of the house, and every morning, sometimes before, sometimes after breakfast, grandma spent an hour or two watching them, picking off dead leaves, and doing the many little things of which one knows almost nothing, till they have plants of their own. Ainslee stood still for a moment, as he reached grandma, who was standing by her pet tea-rose, on which one delicate, creamy-white bud had half opened.

"That's a beauty rose," said he. "It's prettier than the pink ones, I do believe. Why, grandma, there's another speck of a bud, way down in the leaves. You didn't know it, did you?"

"No, I didn't," said grandma, smiling down at Ainslee. "I didn't mean to pick this, because I thought it was the only one, and it seemed almost a pity not to leave it on the bush; but now we'll put it in grandpa's vase, with one of the pink ones, and some geranium leaves, and he will have a good time all day looking at it."

"I guess I'm glad I ain't going to march in the pecession," said Ainslee, walking on by grandma's side.

"What procession? I didn't know anything about a procession."

"Why, so you didn't," Ainslee said. "That was 'cause you had a headache, an' I didn't come into your room. Every one o' the schools is goin' to march, all through the streets an' everywhere, with two banners, an' all the girls in white, maybe, an' I wanted to. Mamma would n't let me, 'cause she said it might be a hot day, an' maybe I'd get a headache, walking an' walking, an' couldn't enjoy myself a speck when I came home. I was awful mad to think I could n't, an' now I'm glad."

"Glad of what?" said mamma, who came around the house with Bertie on her arm.

"Glad I'm not going to march," said Ainslee, "'cause I feel just as if something nice was going to happen."

"Do you?" mamma said, smiling. "Well, breakfast is ready, and grandpa is standing in the door, calling to us. Bertie is coming to the table for the first time, to-day, you know, and you will want to behave very nicely, because he does all that you do."

"Then I can't gobble my bread and milk any more," said Ainslee. "Grandpa says I gobble it. Do I, all the time, mamma?"

"No, not all the time," mamma answered, as they went into the dining-room; "but very often, I am afraid. Bertie's sharp eyes will see every time you do it now."

"I 'most wish he was just as big as me," said Ainslee, "only then I couldn't hear him say his words so funny. Nurse says I'm a dreffful example to him."

"That's because he makes so much more noise when you're at home," grandma said, as they all sat down. "I believe you make more noise than all your uncles put together."

"I don't make it all," said Ainslee, going on with his breakfast. "Some of it makes itself. I can't help hollering a little bit, grandma, 'cause I feel so good 'most all the time."

"Don't stop the boy," said grandpa. "There are days when I should like to 'holler' myself, if it were not so very improper, and this is one of them. What *are* you letting Bertie do, my dear?"

Mamma turned, and so did they all, to Bertie, who, tired of trying to hold his spoon as mamma had shown him how to do, had taken the opportunity, when she was not looking, to turn it upside down on his head, and was now winking away the drops of milk which ran down over his eye.

"I didn't show him how to do *that*," said Ainslee. "I don't believe I ever put my bread and milk on my head, mamma."

"Yes you did, and worse than that," said mamma, as she wiped Bertie's hands and face, and

went on feeding him herself. "Why, father, there is Dr. Sumner now! Did you think he would be here so early?"

Grandpa got up hastily from the table, and went into the hall, returning in a moment with a very tall gentleman, who shook hands with every one, and sat down at once by mamma.

"Just in time, just in time," he said. "I rode over before all the popping and whizzing began, for I didn't want my neck broken; and if there is any one thing above another that Sally won't stand, it's a fire-cracker. I told Culligan to put her in the darkest corner of the barn, and if she has cotton in her ears she will not get nervous through the day, and I shall have a surer chance of getting home alive to-morrow. Who are you?" he added, turning so suddenly that Ainslee dropped his knife and fork, and could not in the least tell what ought to be said to this very strange man.

"My oldest boy," said mamma, helping him out. "And here is my youngest."

"Yours!" said Dr. Sumner, so loudly, that Ainslee jumped. "Nonsense! day before yesterday I carried you round the garden on my back. Fiddlesticks! they're not yours!"

"We are," said Ainslee, turning very red, and standing up. "My mamma don't tell stories."

"Doesn't she?" said Dr. Sumner. "Well, I don't believe she does; but what in the world have I been about? Certainly I did carry her on my back not so long ago, just as I shall probably carry you after breakfast. Don't you know who I am?"

"He very soon will," said mamma, laughing. "I have known Dr. Sumner ever since I was a very little girl, Ainslee, and that does not seem long to me, or to him either."

"Long?" repeated the Doctor, going on with his breakfast. "Why, it isn't long ago since grandpa there, and I, were playing tag and foot-ball, in his father's back-yard. Foot-ball! Look at that foot, and see if it has much notion of foot-ball in it now," and the Doctor stretched out a long leg ending in almost as long a boot, which seemed to have a white patch on the end.

"See there, sir," he went on, to Ainslee, who had walked around the table to see what it meant. "That is what you are coming to, by and by. Perfectly new, I assure you, Mrs. Walton, and I did think I should get through the day in them. But one twinge, as I rode along, decided me. I have not seen my old friend for six years, I said. Shall new boots stand between me and the joyfulness of my day with him? Never! and I cut with my pocket-knife, madam, just such a hole,

as, I grieve to say, you will find in every pair of boots I own."

"What for?" asked Ainslee, still amazed.

"Corns, my boy; everything yields to corns."

"Grandma's got one, an' I hurt her sometimes, stepping on it," said Ainslee. "But she doesn't cut a hole in her shoe."

"I do," said the Doctor, rising with the rest. "Now, Walton, one look at Sally, and then the old arbor, if you please, and a cigar and a talk."

"Who is Sally?" said Ainslee, who had wanted to follow, but was held back by mamma.

"A little brown mare," she answered, "nobody knows how many years old, and which Dr. Sumner thinks, or pretends to think, is very frisky and unsafe to ride."

"Who is he? where did he come from?" Ainslee went on.

"He is a very dear old friend of grandpa's," said mamma, "and indeed, of all of us. He used to be a professor in a college, but ever since you were born, he has been in Europe and the Holy Land; almost all over the world in fact, and only came home a week or two since. You will see him often now, for he lives near Uncle John's house, and he comes here a great deal."

"Has he got any little boys and girls?" said Ainslee.

"Not one," mamma answered. "He has never been married. Some day I will tell you more about him. You will like him dearly by and by, for he is very good as well as very queer. There, he is calling you now. Run."

Ainslee ran out, to find him standing in the summer-house.

"Grandpa has gone in for a few moments," he said. "Did you know that every one of your uncles and aunts have ridden round the garden on these very shoulders, exactly as you are going to do this minute?" and Ainslee all at once found himself swung up to these broad shoulders, and trotting in and out among the flower-beds, as if each winding path were known by heart. He hardly knew whether to be pleased or not; but the grave face, which grew quite red and perspiry in the work, was a kindly one, and he made up his mind, when finally put down, and looked at by a pair of very keen eyes, that here was somebody he should soon like just as much as mamma had said.

"I wish you'd let me see Sally," he said.

"If you are very sure your pockets are not full of fire-crackers and torpedoes," said the Doctor, "and that one will not go off in the barn."

"Torpedoes!" said Ainslee. "Why, I'd forgotted it was Fourth o' July; but I haven't got

any torpedoes. Grandpa was goin' to get some, an' I didn't ask him for 'em. Why! but yes I have," he went on; for, putting a hand in his pocket, it touched something, which, on being pulled out, certainly was a package of torpedoes.

"I didn't put 'em there," he said, looking with surprise at his hand. "I guess mamma must have, in the night maybe, or else it was grandpa."

"There comes grandpa now," said the Doctor, with a little twinkle in his eyes. "You can ask him, and in the mean time I'll empty my pockets."

"You did it! You did it!" said Ainslee, who had seen the twinkle, and who looked with great curiosity at a small box which had come out of the pocket. "What *have* you got in that box?"

"Plague, pestilence, and famine; general misery and particular muss," said the Doctor, untying the string. "I mean I've got something which, when alive, represents all this, and much more of the same sort. They are soldiers, my boy. Nothing but wood, but about as useful as the real article. Now, very soon I'll show you a game, only, as there is nobody but me to play with you, it will not be as nice as it might be."

"You're nice enough," said Ainslee: "but there's Sinny coming now, and Tommy Martin

too. I forgot we were all going to fire off our fire-crackers together."

"Which is Sinny — the black or the white boy?" asked Dr. Sumner, looking sharply at both boys as they came in at the gate.

"Why, the black one," said Ainslee, surprised that everybody did not know who Sinny was, and doubtful whether to run and meet them, or stay where he was. The Doctor settled the question by calling, "Come boys!" and Tommy and Sinny walked forward, a little afraid of the tall stranger, and yet curious to know all about the red soldiers in the box.

"Where'd you get 'em?" Sinny whispered.

"I didn't get 'em; he did," Ainslee answered. "An' we're going to play with 'em, I guess."

"Tell me, first, why you keep Fourth of July?" said the Doctor, "and then have your play."

"'Cause everybody does," said Tommy.

"'Cause the cannons fire," said Ainslee.

"I know some, only I can't tell," said Sinny.

"Then you don't know," said Dr. Sumner. "Nobody knows anything perfectly, till they can put it into words which will tell it plainly to somebody else. Now, try and see what you can do."

"Once," said Sinny, very slowly, while Ainslee and Tommy listened attentively, — "once we wasn't free a bit, and a king made us do everything he was a mind to, an' we didn't have anything our own way. Pretty soon we got tired o' this, an' said we wouldn't have sich work, an' a lot o' men got together, an' wrote a letter, an' said in it, they wouldn't stand it any longer, an' they'd fight every minute, unless the king behaved better. The king wouldn't; an' he sent a lot o' soldiers over, an' we kept a-fightin', an' licked 'em awful, so't they all went home as fast as they could; an' ever since then we've kep' Fourth o' July."

"Very well," said Dr. Sumner, not smiling a bit. "But you haven't told me yet, exactly, why it is Fourth of *July* we keep. Why would n't the fourth of June do as well?"

"Oh, 'cause, I know now," said Sinny. "They wrote the letter Fourth o' July. Gran'ther said so. I asked him this morning, an' he told me all what I told you."

"Pretty nearly right," said the Doctor. "You know about all that such small people as you need know just yet. Perhaps, when another year comes, you can understand more fully what a great day it really is, even if there were not a bell rung, or a cannon fired, or a fire-cracker set

off. Gunpowder doesn't help it in the least. Now, I 'll show you what to do with these fellows. Where is the sawdust, Ainslee? in the wood-house?"

"Yes," said Ainslee, running to keep up with the Doctor's long steps. All three stood still and watched him, while he poured sawdust from the barrel, and mixed it with a little water which Sinny brought, till by and by there was quite a hill.

"Now," said he, "you might as well use your crackers and torpedoes to some purpose, as waste them firing at nothing. You see all these soldiers are painted red. The English, who came over long ago, to 'make us mind,' as Sinny says, all wore red coats too. We were so poor, then, that a good many of us had no coats at all; but for all that, there was one battle among the first, — the battle of Bunker Hill, — from which we sent the redcoats flying. I've made a hill for you, and now put the soldiers down on it just where you like. There are forty of them, and sticking them into the sawdust a little way, they stand quite firmly. Now, you are all Yankees, fighting for your freedom, remember, and here is a pop-gun for each of you. I'll show you how."

Out of the same pocket came three little play-pistols, and the Doctor, putting a torpedo in one,

took aim at a soldier at the bottom of the hill, and fired. The torpedo went off, and so did the soldier, which tumbled heels over head at once.

"Ain't it fun?" said Ainslee. "Do give me a gun right away."

Tommy and Sinny took theirs, and the little package of torpedoes which came from the same wonderful pocket, and then the Doctor stood still and watched a moment, while the three fired without hitting anything, walking away as he heard grandpa call. The game grew exciting. It was so easy not to hit, and so hard to tumble a redcoat nicely over. Charlie and Jo Stearns came in presently, and took turns at once, till all the torpedoes were gone, and yet not more than half the redcoats down.

"We've got to take fire-crackers now," said Ainslee, "and that won't be half as nice."

"I tell you what," said Tommy. "Let's put a whole string of fire-crackers all round 'em, and set 'em off to once. Maybe some of 'em will tumble down."

"Well," said Ainslee, beginning to pull from his pack, and all made a circle about the rest of the British army, two or three crackers deep, and then put a match to the top one.

Fiz-z-z! splutter! bang! went one after another; and when the smoke cleared away, not

only every redcoat lay flat, but part of Bunker Hill had gone too.

"Two of 'em hasn't got any arms left," said Sinny, as they picked up the soldiers; "an' three are without any legs. What'll we do with 'em?"

"Mend 'em sometime, maybe," said Ainslee, "I can't now, though, for I'm hungry. I guess it's 'most dinner-time."

"Then I've got to run," said Tommy. "What you goin' to do this afternoon?"

"Goin' to walk with mamma an' all of 'em," Ainslee answered; "an' this evening, you're all coming to see fire-works, you know."

"Bully!" said Tommy, starting off with the rest; and Ainslee ran in to tell mamma about the five soldiers he had shot down himself, and to see if dinner were ready. In the parlor Mr. Parker was sitting talking with grandpa and Dr. Sumner, and mamma sat by the window sewing.

"All through playing, Ainslee?" said she. "Very soon we shall start, and you had better go and wash your face and hands now, while nurse is up-stairs."

"Start where?" said Ainslee. "I'm dreffful hungry. Sha'n't we have dinner first?"

"How would you like to eat it in the woods back of the mill-pond, where we went for violets?" mamma said.

"Oh, oh!" Ainslee shouted. "And sit on the ground, and everything? I wish we were there this minute."

"Hurry, then," said mamma; and Ainslee danced up-stairs, to find nurse in her sun-bonnet, putting on Bertie's hat and sack.

"Every one of us a-going!" said he. "Ain't I glad I didn't march?"

"Your ma knows what's best, I guess," said nurse, "an' she ain't likely to say 'no' to anything you want, unless it's something you've no business to do, anyway."

"Is Ann going too?" Ainslee asked, passing over the little lecture. "I saw a big basket in the kitchen. Is she going to carry it?"

"No; it's pretty heavy," nurse answered. "Culligan 's goin' to take it, and maybe come for it. Now run along. Ann and me are coming bymeby."

All were in the hall when Ainslee went down, even grandma, who hardly ever walked very much, and grandpa locked the front-door and put the big key in his pocket. "Nurse will see to the back-door," he said. "Now, friends, march on."

"Eyes right," said Dr. Sumner, shouldering his cane. "Eyes right, coat-tails left," as a step forward showed the fact that grandpa had locked

one of his in a little bit, but so firmly, that the door had to be unlocked before it would come out.

How they all laughed, and what a merry party it was, that went on over the old road, past Sugar Loaf, and on to the mill-pond. One point ran out some little distance; a smooth green bank, from which rose up, tall and stately, one great elm, and under it Mr. Parker stopped a moment, and lifted his hat to meet the sweet air, which seemed to come fresh from the mountain side.

"Here is the place," he said. "The woods are good, if one wants only green leaves, and flowers, and moss; but to-day the eyes must be filled, and all that lake, and mountain, and sky can give, we will have."

"Right," Dr. Sumner said, sitting down at once on a log, which seemed to have been put in just the right place for one to see all that could be seen. "Mrs. Walton, you will never take cold here, as you certainly would if you went one step further. Allow me," and grandma found herself suddenly with bonnet off, and on the same log with the Doctor.

"But I didn't wear my cap. I wasn't going to take my bonnet off," said she. "Mercy on us! how I must look! Give me my bonnet."

"Never mind how you look, madam," said Dr. Sumner, hanging the bonnet quite out of her reach, on a little branch of the elm. "You look well enough. All you have to do is to attend to Nature, and let your bonnet alone. Walton, there is no fairer spot than this in all the wide world I have seen. Ainslee, come here. Fifty years ago I saw this elm a sapling, and now what a great tree it is. There's the very place your grandfather and I swam across, just above the dam, only there was no dam then, and the water poured down over the rocks, just as you see it in the mill stream beyond."

"It's a good ways across," said Ainslee, wondering when he would be big enough to swim too. "It's five miles, I guess."

"Not quite," said Dr. Sumner. "It is nearly half a mile, though, and that was a long swim; I was almost twelve, and grandpa almost fourteen; and he bet me his knife he'd get across first. He didn't, though; and when you come to my house, I'll show you the knife."

"Did you keep it so long?" Ainslee said.

"I never lose anything but my wits, sometimes," said the Doctor. "Do you?"

Ainslee preferred not to answer this question; and as Mr. Parker spoke just then, slipped away, and went down to the edge of the pond to watch

the shiners, and pick up the very smallest white and yellow stones, such as were found nowhere else. Going back after a time, he found that Culligan had come with the basket, and mamma was busy taking out the various things, and putting them on a white cloth she had spread on the grass. At the edge of the woods, nurse and Ann were walking with Bertie, and Ainslee had plenty to do, running back and forth, till the luncheon was ready, and every one sat down on the grass, and ate cold chicken and bread and butter. The sound of fire-crackers came now and then from the houses beyond the turn, and the echo of guns from the village, just enough to remind them of the day, yet not enough to distract or annoy; and Ainslee, hungry and happy, sat leaning against the elm, taking in, almost unconsciously, the beauty, which in time to come, would seem to him fresher and fairer with each passing year.

By and by Ann and nurse came, to gather up the dishes, and take their own luncheon to the wood. Dr. Sumner and grandpa talked earnestly, while grandma listened. Mamma took Bertie down the bank, and watched him playing in the sand for a time; and Mr. Parker, sitting under the elm, told Ainslee a story called "The Pine Tree," which he had read in a book Cousin Grace had sent him. "Dream Children" was its

name, and Ainslee had already heard three or four of the sweet stories in it, and was alway asking for more, just as you would do, little people, if it lay on the table, and you could not run away with it yourselves, into some quiet corner, and have a good time all alone.

"Three o'clock and after," said Mr. Parker presently, taking out his watch. "I must be at home by five, for some one is coming."

"Yes, some one is coming," said a voice, and Mr. Parker turned very quickly, and sprang to his feet.

"Grace, why Grace, where did you drop from?" said mamma, catching up Bertie, and running up the bank. "How glad I am to see you!"

"Not exactly from the clouds, but from the Falls," said Cousin Grace, as she kissed grandma and then grandpa, and tried to return Ainslee's hug, and shake hands with Mr. Parker, and kiss mamma, all at once. "I stayed there last night, but they are having such a remarkable celebration, that I concluded it was too much for me, and so left for Windsor in the one o'clock train, to find you all gone when I got up to the house. Mrs. Culligan was keeping guard in the back-kitchen, and told me where you all were, so I came on at once. Don't go home yet. How can you? It is too lovely here."

"Nobody wants to go home but Mr. Parker," said grandpa, "and he may go directly. We mean to stay a little longer. Good-by, Mr. Parker. We shall see you this evening."

"And for the present too, sir," said Mr. Parker, laughing a little, and sitting down by Cousin Grace. "Randy will attend to my interests in the village; and if she does not, let them take care of themselves."

"Half an hour longer, then," said grandpa, turning to Dr. Sumner again; but the half-hour slid into an hour, before anybody knew it; even then grandma said, though she hadn't done such a thing for years, she was almost a mind to stay and see the sun set.

"I wish we could," said grandpa. "But you remember the train gets in a little after seven, and we must not be away."

Ainslee caught only a word or two of this, and was too busy, holding the very smallest of small green frogs, to think what it might mean.

"I'm going to take him home," he said, "and keep him just a little while, 'cause his throat's so yellow;" and he wrapped him in a large leaf, and walked on, watching the kicks and plunges of the two hind-legs, which the leaf did not cover. It was almost dark when they all went in at grandpa's gate; and Sinny, and Tommy,

and Amanda, and two or three more of Ainslee's special playmates, were sitting on the door-step, waiting for him. Ainslee, who had found out in the course of the day, how much grandpa knew, and what he had got, had quite a whispering time with Tommy, which ended in everybody being invited to the wood-house, where, having put the frog into the Aquarium, he pulled out an empty barrel, and set it up near the door. Mamma called just then, and Ainslee went to her, coming back in a moment.

"Mamma says we won't have a real tea to-night," he said, "'cause pretty soon, bymeby, there's going to be ice-cream; but you're all to come into the kitchen a minute, an' have a piece of cake, an' then come out again."

Mamma's piece of cake proved to be a sandwich and *two* pieces of cake, which they all ate standing about the kitchen, and then ran out again. Grandpa was there now; and after more whispering, a rocket suddenly whirled up, and a snake whizzed and sputtered through the grass; and then came some Catherine-wheels and Roman candles, which Ainslee held in his hand as he stood on the flour barrel he had pulled from the wood-shed. Not very much to such of you as can see beautiful fire-works every Fourth of July, but a wonderful sight to these country children,

who, perhaps, had never looked at any before. Soon the last star in the last Roman candle faded away, and as Ainslee jumped down, a shout went up from all the children.

"Now somebody make a speech! somebody ought to make a speech!" Tommy called. "You, Ainslee!"

"In a minute," said Ainslee, as a great blaze shot up from an old tar barrel that grandpa had lighted.

"Put him on the barrel again! Put him on the barrel," said Sinny.

Grandpa lifted Ainslee to it, and stepped back, saying he should have a dreadful cold unless he went right in. Left quite to himself, as he supposed, — no big people to be seen, — Ainslee stood up very straight, and began in a loud voice, —

"My brethren," —

"You mustn't say 'my brethren,'" Sinny interrupted. "'Tain't meeting."

"My brethren," Ainslee went on, not minding him, "I've had a first-rate Fourth o' July an' I hope you have too; an' pretty soon, when you've eaten all your ice-cream, you'll go home an' tell your fathers an' mothers you wish it was Fourth o' July all the time; an' I hope we're goin' to mind everybody we ought'er, all the time,

even Miss Barrett, an' not care if we can't walk in a pecession; an' I don't think I can think of anything more, my brethren, so I guess I'll get down."

A voice from somewhere, said "Bravo!" and a great clapping of hands was heard, for the big people *had* been listening, every one of them. "Bravo!" cried the voice again; and Ainslee, who had stood very still for just one moment, sprang from the barrel into two arms that were very ready to catch and hold him tight.

"Papa!" was all he said, and then why was it that he began to cry? I do not know, unless it is, that all of us, when too full of gladness, do almost always cry just a little bit. Mamma was crying too, for the same reason, I suppose; and after the first greetings were over, the ice-cream eaten, and the children gone away, there were a few more very, very happy tears, as grandpa, in his evening prayer, thanked God, that one who had been long away, had, in His Infinite Love, been brought safely home.

XIX.

POP.

PAPA had been at home a fortnight, the days of which went by more swiftly to Ainslee than days had ever gone before. Even school had lost its charm, and he grudged every moment not spent near papa, who in turn seemed well content to be very near mamma and his little boys, and walked and talked with them all the day long. The "Dezamination" you have heard about from Ainslee, was almost at hand. One week more, and then the great day, when the Committee-men, and all the fathers and mothers would come together, and listen for a whole morning to reading and spelling, and the pieces some of the children were to speak.

Papa had promised to go with mamma, and grandma and grandpa said "perhaps," when Ainslee told them what a nice time they would be sure to have. Every day he learned two verses of a little poem called Casabianca, which grandma liked very much indeed, and had begun to teach him in little bits a year or two before.

It tells the true story of a wonderfully brave little boy, in a very sweet and simple way, and almost all of you can read it, or hear it read, by looking up Mrs. Hemans's Poems, which your mothers will be almost sure to have, among the books which they owned when they were girls. I remember crying over it, when very small indeed: so small, that grandpa had to pronounce for me some of the longer words as I spelled them, till many readings had fixed the lines so firmly in my mind, that I am not likely to forget them, even when an old, old woman.

Every evening Ainslee repeated all he knew of it to his father, and at almost any time of day after school, you could hear him shouting out one verse or another, in the garden or meadow, till old Culligan took to saying, "The boy, oh where was he?" when he wanted Ainslee; and nurse said, "she wished the poetry had blowed up along with the ship, she was so tired of hearing it."

School was to close on Wednesday, and to-day it was Saturday, the last play-day before vacation, and papa and mamma, with Ainslee and Bertie, were to drive over to Uncle John's, and stay over Sunday, coming back early Monday morning in time for school. Not a long drive, for they lived only five or six miles away, and saw grandpa's

family often, so that though I have not told you about it, Lizzie and little John knew just how the beans were coming on in Ainslee's garden, and indeed had helped pull up all the weeds among them, not long before papa came home.

Ainslee sat down on the back door-step, a minute or two, when all ready for a start, and then ran out to the garden for one more look at his vegetables, in order that he might tell Lizzie whether the bean pods had begun to fill, and how soon they were likely to have the succotash party. The barn doors were wide open, and Culligan was leading out Peter, the old white horse.

"Pete's so slow!" Ainslee called, "we won't ever get there. Why don't we have Prince?"

"'Cause your pa said Pete," Culligan answered, backing him between the shafts. "He'll be goin' fast enough for your pa."

"He won't go fast for anybody," Ainslee said, leaning over the garden fence, and then squeezing through a place where a picket had come off.

"Wull, your ma'd ruther ride slow," said Culligan, "for she said to me, she were never tired observin' the looks o' things, an' I believe since that she isn't, though it's she that's seen 'em over an' over."

Mamma came out just then with papa and

Bertie, and grandma followed to see them nicely started.

"There's a new hole in your trousers," she said, as Ainslee jumped in by his father. "Now, how did you do that?"

"It's only a teenty one," Ainslee said, putting his hand over it. "It won't take but a speck o' thread to sew it up. I guess it tored on the fence when I pushed through."

"I guess it wouldn't have tored, if you had gone through the gate as you ought to," grandma answered, smiling a little. "Now Charles, do remember Pete's old, and don't abuse him."

"My father don't hurt him," Ainslee said, looking out at grandma. "Pete *loves* to be abused, the way papa does it."

"Well, well!" grandma laughed, as she walked back a little, and then stood still to see old Pete start off, so slowly one could almost hear his bones creak, and then as papa snapped the whip which did not touch him, turn his wise old head to see if going on were really the thing to be done, and then break into a steady jog-trot, which never varied, and never had, for fifteen years at least, and which soon brought them to the long bridge.

"Let me pay the toll; I want to pay the toll,"

Ainslee said, as Pete stopped of his own accord. "How much is it?"

"Ten cents," a very old man answered, from a chair near the door. "Ten cents, if you want a ticket to come back."

"We're coming back," said Ainslee. "Do we want a ticket?"

"Yes," papa said, giving him a ten cent scrip, and a little girl ran out, and handed up a red ticket. Ainslee knew her, for now and then she came to school, and smiled down at her, as he gave the ten cents, but neither of them spoke a word.

Over the toll-bridge was printed in large, black letters,

"ANY ONE, DRIVING THROUGH THIS BRIDGE FASTER THAN A WALK, SHALL BE FINED FIVE DOLLARS."

Pete must have read this while he stopped, for though papa snapped the whip once or twice, he only cocked one ear, and fairly crawled till the other end was reached, standing stock still, as they passed out to the open air.

"O Pete, Pete!" Ainslee said, giving the reins a little jerk, but Pete would not move.

"He knows too much," said mamma. "Grandpa taught Pete that trick long ago, for he always wanted to stop a minute when this stifling bridge

was passed, and look down the bend in the river before going on, and as long as Pete travels at all, he will surely stand still here."

"No better place in the world," said papa, with a long look down the shining stream, and then chirruping to Pete, who looked back as much as to say, "Now you've done the right thing my friends," and then started on.

How short the ride seemed to Ainslee, who listened to what papa and mamma were saying, or looked out at the houses they passed now and then, and wondered who the children were, playing before them; or up to the tall trees on either side the road, or at the zig-zag fence, over which a squirrel ran, stopping on a post to bark a moment, and then whisking up a beech-tree and balancing on the tip-top twig. Soon the river lay before them again, and on the other side, the little gray house where the ferryman lived.

"Oh!" said Ainslee, delighted, "I didn't know we was coming this way, papa. Let me get out now, and stand on the boat, while we go over."

"Well," said papa, "you may blow the horn too, for the ferryman is in his house, I think, and does not see us."

Ainslee jumped out, and after trying a good many times, blew at last a very faint blast on the

old tin horn, hanging from a nail driven into the same tree to which the great wire was fastened on which the ferry-boat slid over. In a minute or so, an old man came out from the house, and hurrying down the bank to the great flat-boat, pushed it off. Ainslee stood still, watching him over, and listening to the creak of the wire, and jumped in as the boat touched shore. Pete stepped down gingerly, as if not quite sure of the propriety of going by boat, when there was a bridge not a mile away, and looked uneasily up and down the river as they pushed off. Ainslee stood still by the man, who seemed to know Mr. Barton very well, and spoke a word or two to him now and then. The boat was very old; so old that the water came in about Pete's feet, and Ainslee had to stand on the side-piece, to keep his own feet from getting wet.

"S'posin' the wire should break," he said.

"'Twouldn't do no great harm," the man said. "There ain't much current here. I'd have to pole you over, that's all. There's two poles, an' your pa could take one."

Ainslee had no time to discuss the matter, for the other shore was reached, and papa told him to climb in. A few minutes more, and then he saw the three poplars before Uncle John's, and Jack and Lizzie in the front yard playing.

"They don't know we're coming, do they?" Ainslee said; "won't they laugh?"

Jack, looking up that very moment, spied them, and shouting, "O Lizzie! if there isn't Uncle Charles," sprang to meet them. Ainslee tumbled out at once, and that was the last any one saw of the three children, till the bell rang for dinner, when all came in with such dirty faces, nobody could think of kissing them till they had been washed.

Uncle John looked out of the window several times at dinner.

"I am afraid of rain this afternoon," he said at last, "and this year's crop of hay is so fine, I must not lose any of it; so Barton, though I'm sorry to leave you here, I must be off and hurry the men."

"Why not all go?" said papa. "The children will be very ready, I know, and mamma and Bertie too."

"It may rain and wet us," said mamma.

"You can come back on the first load, if you like," said Uncle John. "I shall send one home at once."

So, when the great hay wagon creaked out of the farm-yard, half an hour later, big and little people all sat in the bottom, and jounced along through the narrow lane to the wide meadow,

where the men were raking up the sweet scented hay, into which every child, down to Bertie, tumbled at once, and continued to tumble, till driven away by the big rakes.

Very soon the load was ready, and the children begged to ride back on it.

"Not this time," said Uncle John, "but on the next perhaps. Another wagon will be here soon, and you may ride on that. Perhaps mamma wants to go home on this one."

"No indeed," said mamma. "Your cloud has gone, and I will wait till I see another, before running away."

Ainslee saw something under a tree, about which it was necessary to find out all he could at once, and dashed off with the two cousins. A great brown jug it proved to be, and a tin cup by its side.

"What is it?" he said, putting his nose down to the mouth. "It smells first-rate. Can't we have some?"

"It's molasses and water, and some ginger in it," Lizzie said. "That's what the mowers always have; lots of it, but I guess this is hot, standing in the sun."

"No, 'taint," said a big man, who came just then for a drink, "'cause it's been in the brook, nigh all the mornin'. The other jug's there now,

if you want it extra cold, but you've got to bring down some more from the house if you take that."

"Well," said Lizzie, and the man who drank and drank as if he would never stop, turned the jug upside down, to show there was not another drop in it, and went away.

"He doesn't know where the molasses bottle is, but I do," said Lizzie, "and I'll put some more molasses in this, before we get our drink." And she ran on to a thicket of thimble-berry bushes, where Mike the head man had left the dinner-pails, and put her hand in for the molasses.

"Bow, wow wow! bow wow!" barked a very small black dog rising up from a coat where he had been lying.

"Oh!" cried Lizzie, drawing back, and then seeing what a speck of a dog it really was, put her hand once more toward the bottle.

"Bow, wow wow! bow wow!" came again, and this time sharp white teeth snapped so near the hand, that Jack pulled her away.

"What a spitfire," he said. "That's the dog Mike told about, ever so long ago in the barn. He said it came to his house most starved to death last spring, when the baby died, and little Mike kept it, and wouldn't let it go away. Mike thought it wasn't good for anything, and now he says he wouldn't take twenty dollars for it, 'cause it knows so much."

"Well, I wish it didn't know so much," said Lizzie, "for I want the ginger and things. Any way I want a drink, and Mike 'll have to fix some for his own self, if he's got such a dog, it won't let me touch my own father's things. What's his name?"

"Pop," said Jack, "unless maybe it's changed. I told Mike that was a good name, and he said maybe he'd call him that. Here Pop, nice Pop! come here, Pop!"

Pop it evidently was, for the half inch of tail wagged a very little, but Pop never stirred, only cocked both ears, and then dropped them, as much as to say, "I would if I could, but you see I can't."

"Any way, let's go an' get a drink," said Ainslee, tired of waiting, and picking up the tin cup, he started for the line of alders, which marked the course of the little stream. The big jug sat on a stone in the middle of the deepest pool, and Ainslee almost tumbled in, as he reached forward and pulled it to him.

"You thirsty too, Lizzie?" he said; "it's so full, I can't pour without spilling. We'll all have to drink out of the nose."

So the three drank, till not one wanted another drop, and then sat down in the grass.

"Grasshoppers make *me*lasses," said Ainslee,

holding a great brown one in his hand. "May-be they have melasses an' water sometimes for a party."

"They don't make but one drop apiece," said Lizzie. "It would take 'em a good while to get enough."

"No it wouldn't," Ainslee went on, "because they have acorn cups for their jugs, an' drink out o' the acorn saucers you know."

"Then they ain't polite," Jack said. "Mother won't let us drink out of our saucers. There's little Mike. He's fourteen years old most. Ain't he awful little? Don't you want him to come over the fence and tell about Pop?"

"Yes," Ainslee answered, standing up to look at a boy, as small for a boy as Pop was for a dog, who crawled between the rails as they spoke, and stood looking at them.

"Where you going, Mike?" Jack called. "Come here."

"It's afther Pop I am," said Mike. "It's in the faild he is."

"He tried to bite me, when I went for molasses to fill the jug up," said Lizzie. "Did you teach him that?"

"An' I didn't," said Mike, sitting down comfortably by them, and very ready for a talk. "It's little I could tache him: he knows more nor most Christians this minute."

"Tell all about where you got him," said Jack, stretching out at full length, and ready to talk or listen, whichever seemed best. "Ainslee don't know where you got him, and he wants to."

"I didn't get him, he comed;" said Mike, sitting still a minute or so as if thinking, and then, clasping his hands over his knees, and rocking back and forth, he went on.

"'Twas in the spring he came, an' the night too, that little Pat died, an' he sittin' under the windy, an' a howlin' the night through. 'O wurra! wurra!' says mother when she hears it, an' she throws her apron over her face, an' wouldn't look at Pat, but jist held him up to her. Father says to me, 'You go, Mike,' says he, 'an' drive the crather away;' an' I wint, glad enough to go too, for I couldn't slape for thinkin' maybe little Pat wouldn't be alive whin the mornin' come. There Pop was, under the windy, an' he wouldn't stir, for all the sticks an' the stones I sint at him, but kep' his mouth open jist, a lookin' at me an' a howlin'. I grew frightened of him, an' father too, for he'd come out an' give him a kick. 'It's sint the crather is,' says he, 'an' I'll not be dhrivin' him away;' an' he jist goes in, an' sits down, an' keeps a lookin' at mother an' Pat.

"Whither it were long or whither it were short, I couldn't tell ye, but all to onct, Pat give a lape like, an' throwed up his little arms, an' thin he was gone. 'It's with the blissed angels he is,' says father, a-thryin' to take him from mother, but she wouldn't let go, an' then she sat till the day was come, jist rockin' back an' forth with him, till Mary Maloney, that's me father's sister, come in, an' she says, —

"Now give him to me, Norah, till I straighten him."

"'No hands'll do it but mine,' says mother, an' she gets up quiet like, an' tells us all to lave her alone; an' whin father come, with the little coffin he'd been to the town to buy, she'd put a white frock on little Pat, an' they put him in it, with posies round him, till he looked like the blissed Virgin's own child." And Mike crossed himself. "There was few to the wake, for there's not many o' our own people here, but every one there was, come, an' through it all Pop sat by the bed, an' he wouldn't stir. 'He shall stay an' niver want bite nor sup,' says mother, 'for 'twas he give warnin' as Pat was to go.' So we've kep' him an' there's nothin' he don't know. He stays by the things in the field, an' sorra to the one, that goes near 'em, unless it's me father, an' there isn't a thrick he can't do. It's starved

he was whin he first come, an' the bones of him stuck through the skin, so he'll niver be growin' much more, but there's a dale in him, an' he's company like for mother an' me, whin he don't go off with father. There's many a day whin I can't go to school, an' I sit with my book maybe, an' Pop a-lyin' by me, an' niver give it a thought hardly. I'm not like the others, an' can't play nor run like thim."

"Why can't you?" said Ainslee, who had listened earnestly to every word Mike said.

"It's the pain in me back that won't let me, some o' the days," Mike answered; "though there's a many that I'm in an' out with the rest of 'em. It's the fall that did it."

"What fall?" Ainslee asked.

"From the tree," said Mike. "The appil-tree I climbed to get the nest was in the top. The limb broke an' let me down to the ground, an' whin they picked me up for dead, it's my back was ruined intirely, so that I'll never grow all I would a-done. See now, there's a drop o' rain fallin', an' the clouds are black like."

Uncle John's voice came over the field; "Hurry, children, the last load is going!" and though Ainslee longed to stay and hear more, he ran on with the rest. Mamma had gone some time before with Aunt Sarah and Bertie, and papa tossed

the children quickly to the top of the load, and then sprang up himself, for a "little bit of the days of his youth," he said. Big Mike urged on the horses, which trotted fast as the heavy load would let them, through the meadow, and into the lane leading to the barn. A low rumble of thunder sounded from the west: the sun had gone behind thick clouds, the black edges of which seemed almost to curl under the lightning which glanced through them at times. The wind whirled through the trees, driving little wisps of hay before it, and great drops, falling at intervals, plashed on the horses' broad backs, and on Ainslee's cheeks as he looked up to the sky.

"I don't much like the thunder," he said.

"Why not?" papa asked.

"It's so loud and frightening," Ainslee went on. "Lizzie don't either, nor Jack, I guess. She's got her face all covered up."

"No need of that," said papa. "Here we are at home, and now there is no danger to dread;" and he pushed them through the barn window, which stood open ready for the last load of hay to be pitched in, from which they slid down quickly to the floor, and ran into the house. Coming in presently, papa found them all by the parlor window, looking out to the storm which, for a few minutes, had raged furiously, but was now dying away.

"We got the last fork-full in, just as the rain came," he said, sitting down near the children. "That crop is all right for this year. Are you afraid now, Lizzie?"

"Only some," Lizzie answered. "I looked out, and there was one flash all purple, Uncle Charles, and one came straight down, as if it went right into the ground. I screamed just a speck, an' I guess Ainslee would too, only he wanted to make fun of me. Is it silly to be afraid?"

"No; it is best to be a little afraid," papa said, smiling at the surprised look which Jack and Ainslee gave him, "because the fear will make you careful not to be in dangerous places if you can help it, when a thunder-storm comes up. When you are a little older, you will understand exactly why it is better not to be under tall trees, or out in an open field, or even on top of a load of hay as we were to-day. Better too, not to be very near an open window, as you were when I came in. On the whole I think that, by and by, when I am cooler, I will tell you of Franklin, and what he did about the lightning; his kite, and his key, and his silk string."

"His kite!" said Jack. "A man fly a kite! What a man! Maybe, though, he flew it to show his little boy how."

"No, he didn't," said papa. "Wait awhile, and you shall know all about it."

So an hour later, when the rain was over, and the rainbow, which had spanned the sky as the last drops fell, and the sun shone out, was fading away in the clear blue, Jack and Lizzie and Ainslee sat by papa on the broad piazza, and listened to the wonderful story of the lightning; born in the clouds, dying at once, and yet living forever. Ask your older brother or sister to tell you this riddle, which, when you once know well, will, I think, be always new and fresh to your minds, whether thought of in storm, or in summer nights when the horizon gleams with the flickering heat lightning, or sometimes, maybe, in northern winters, when stars shine clear, and pale auroras rise and fall amid them.

It was almost six o'clock when the story, and the talk which followed, ended, and the three children ran to the barn for one swing before supper. Big Mike was there, still packing the hay, and Pop, with little Mike by him, sat again on the coat which had been thrown into the corner: not on guard this time, though, and ready to get acquainted at once. How he did look, too, when one examined him. Ears cut so close one needed spectacles to see them, and a rusty black beard sticking out all ways from his small nose.

Such shining yellow eyes, too, that one might have thought a little fire kindled at the back of each.

"Don't be touchin' him, till he's smelled yees all over," said Mike. "He won't be friends unless he jist chooses."

Pop left his place, and walked about Ainslee, sniffing for a moment, and then with a short, sharp bark, ran between his legs so suddenly, that Ainslee tipped into the hay lying all about.

"He's all right," said Jack, rolling over after him, and a play began, which lasted till the dust flew in such fashion, nobody could tell which was Pop and which the children.

"Look at your head, Ainslee," Lizzie said, sitting up at last. "It's all full o' hay-seed."

"So's yours," Ainslee answered, shaking himself; "and there's spears o' hay sticking up all over it. I didn't think I was going to get so dirty. It's good mamma brought some clothes for Sunday, ain't it?"

"I should think it was," said Lizzie. "You'd look great, going to church just the way you are now. There's Mary picking up chips; let's help her."

Big Mike by this time had called for little Mike and Pop, and all gone away together, and the three cousins ran to the wood-house, and

carried in a supply of chips for Mary, who said they were better to get tea by, than a regular fire of big sticks.

"I let it all go down after dinner," she said, "so the kitchen isn't hot a bit, an' I can sew by the window all the afternoon most, till it's time to boil the kettle for tea. You're going to have something good to-night, — Flap-jacks!"

"Flap-jacks!" repeated Ainslee; "what are they?" watching Mary as she broke an egg into a basin on the table.

"I guess you've had 'em, if you've lived at your grandma's," said Mary. "Old-fashioned they say they be, but they're better'n any new-fangled griddle."

"Round pan cakes," said Jack, smacking his lips. "Big as a plate, you know, an' butter an' sugar on every one, an' then she cuts 'em like a pie, an' nobody ever has enough. I don't."

"That ain't sayin' the rest don't," said Mary. "You run off now, and when the bell rings, I guess you'll get all that's good for you."

The children went up-stairs to be "redd up," as nurse called it, but came down in time to watch the baking of the last two or three golden brown cakes, one plate of which Lizzie was allowed to take into the dining room, where presently big and little people both, declared them

to be the very best that could be made. Haying makes one wonderfully hungry, and as Ainslee ended supper with one of Aunt Sarah's delicious custards, he sighed so deeply as he came to the bottom of the cup, that Uncle John looked up.

"What now, Ainslee?" he said.

Ainslee laughed a little, and then whispered to Lizzie, who sat next to him.

"He says he's going to have a custard baked in a milk pan, when he's a man," said Lizzie, "and eat every bit, so's to have enough."

"That's the way with all of us," said Uncle John, handing him the last half of his own custard. "I had resolved that my first act on growing up, should be to oversee the baking of a tremendous mince-pie, to be my own private property, not touched by anybody else; but that pie never has been baked, and never will be."

"Won't Aunt Sarah make it?" said Ainslee.

"Perhaps," Uncle John laughed, rising from the table. "I'll talk to her about it, and see what she thinks."

Ainslee stood by them, listening a few moments to the half-jesting talk, which by and by grew beyond him, and then went out once more to the piazza for a last play before bed-time, which came all too soon. Talking went on for a little while between the rooms, and then the

Sandman opened the Dream Umbrella, which you who read Andersen, know all about, and under which Lizzie and Jack and Ainslee staid, the whole night through.

Sunday went by almost as swiftly as Saturday, for though there was no playing, there was so much to do, that night came before they knew it. The church was nearly two miles away, and the great rockaway carried all that could be squeezed into it. Uncle John and papa walked, and Aunt Sarah put up a luncheon in a basket, for as it was such a distance, they did not go home between the services.

The minister was a very old man, who read and preached so slowly, that though Ainslee tried very hard to listen, he grew sleepier and sleepier. He could feel the little breeze which blew in through the half open window now and then, and almost hear the bumble-bee droning over the clover tops. A locust chirped long and shrill from the poplar close by, and as Ainslee listened, his head grew heavy, and papa's arm drawing him nearer, was the last thing he knew, till he woke with a start, to find the organ playing, and the people standing up for the last hymn.

"From Greenland's icy mountains" it was, and Ainslee stood up and sang the little bit he

knew. He felt quite wide awake when the benediction had been said, and all went out; some to the old grave-yard, where they walked up and down among the stones, and a few to the slope back of the church, where they sat under the trees, and ate the luncheon they had brought.

"I know a better place than any of these," said Uncle John. "Come, friends."

"Do you?" said a voice, "so do I. Come with me," and Ainslee turned in surprise to see Dr. Sumner, who sat so far back in the church that he had not noticed him.

"We were going down to the river bank," said Uncle John, shaking hands with him. "There are altogether too many of us, to think of going with you. We should crowd you out of the house."

"So much the better," said Dr. Sumner. "Who wants to be in the house on a day like this? Come with me."

Uncle John went on, and all the rest followed, of course. A very little way down the road, and then a small gate, through which they passed into what had once been a broad meadow, covered now with almost a forest, about the long, low house. There were seats under the trees, and openings among them, through which the

river was seen beyond. Ainslee ran forward to find a little branch of the river winding through the foot of the meadow, and making an island of one point, on which stood a feathery larch and two great maples. A little bridge led to this; there were seats under these trees, too, and Ainslee stood still, hoping the big people would all come here. Sure enough, Dr. Sumner walked straight on after him, and soon every one was sitting under the trees, and enjoying the cool breeze which came fresh from the river.

"I wish I needn't go to church this afternoon," said Ainslee. "I wish I could stay here, or else go into the house."

"So you may, if mamma is willing," said Dr. Sumner. "I am not going again myself till evening, and you may look at pictures or talk, just as you please."

"Some o' both, I guess," said Ainslee, leaning his head against mamma, who talked on, till soon the bell rang again, and the big people got up, and began to walk slowly on toward the road to the church. Dr. Sumner watched them through the gate, and then led the way to the house, taking the children through two or three rooms, which, coming from such bright sunshine, seemed to them very dark and almost chilly, and stopping at last in one very large one, heavily

wainscoted, and with deep window-seats. Here, though, the sun poured in cheerily, lighting up a world of curious things, about which Ainslee wanted to ask so many questions, and would have begun at once, had not the fire-place attracted his attention. It was an open one, with the brass "dogs," or andirons standing there, and between them a "bough pot," as grandma Walton called them, a tall blue and white jar, filled with asparagus branches. It was not at this that Ainslee looked, however, but at the curious pictures which seemed to make the fire-place.

"What are they?" he said, as Jack and Lizzie too, came up and stood looking at them.

"Tiles," said Dr. Sumner; "made of crockery like the plates, and with Bible pictures on them. Older than I am, too, a deal. They were here when I was a boy, for I was born in this house, and, please God, mean to die in it."

"Don't," said Ainslee, putting his finger on a fat Daniel in the Lion's Den; "don't die. What is this man doing with the three cats?"

"They are not cats; they are lions," said Dr. Sumner, sitting down in a great chair near them. "Which shall I do? Get a book and show you pictures about which we can talk, or tell you what these different tiles mean?"

"Tell about the tiles," the children all agreed, and Dr. Sumner began, first telling the story of Daniel, and then going on to Joseph, whose whole history was pictured here. Ainslee liked the story of Joseph better than almost any other in the Old Testament, and the three listened intently till the last words came, and Dr. Sumner said, "And so he died, and was buried with his fathers," and then sat silent, looking straight before him.

"Died," repeated Ainslee. "They all died. I wish we didn't have to die; it's nice to stay alive. I wouldn't want any dog, even Pop, to come and howl under the window and make me die."

"What!" said Dr. Sumner; and Ainslee, after some hesitation, told the story of little Pat and Pop, as well as he could remember it.

"Pop had nothing to do with his dying, poor little fellow!" said Dr. Sumner, when he ended. "It happened so, and the Irish being very superstitious, said Pop was sent to give warning. A good many people believe as Mike did, but that does not make it true. Death himself is God's only messenger, when we go out of the world, and he is not to be dreaded."

"I don't want to die and be buried," said Ainslee. "I looked at an old grave in the

graveyard to-day, and there were weeds on it, and the stone tumbled down, and everything. I shouldn't want to be put in the ground."

"It is not *you* who will be put in the ground," said Dr. Sumner; "only the case in which the *you* was. All in you that can think, and act, and love, goes home to the great Father, and the body, that never does quite all we wish from it, is put away. Dying is like going to sleep. Better than going to sleep, child, for in sleeping bad dreams often come, and tossings and trouble, and we wake up tired and sick, but when the eyes shut in this last sleep of all, there are no dreams, and God himself is with us when we wake."

"I need not be afraid, then," said Ainslee, after a little pause.

"Never," Dr. Sumner answered, "if you try always to be good as you know how to be, and trust God for the rest."

"It is hard work to be good," Lizzie said softly.

"Hard work, indeed," Dr. Sumner answered: "but you know where all the power to be good comes from, and we never have to do more than we are able, at the worst of times."

"I'm glad of that," Lizzie said, and then there was silence for a little while, broken at last

by Dr. Sumner, who took down from one of the shelves a great book, which proved to be full of pictures, very beautiful ones. It was the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the time went by so swiftly in talking of each one, that the older people were back from church before the children thought of looking for them. There was more talking for a little while, and then the rockaway came, and all got in, Jack and Ainslee standing between their father's knees, and Lizzie sitting on the back seat between mamma and Aunt Sarah. Supper was ready when they got home, and after it was over, everybody sat on the piazza, watching the sunset, and at last beginning to sing old hymns. Bed-time came too soon, just as it had done the night before, and as Ainslee lay down with Jack, in the little white bed, he wished almost that there were no need of going back for the Examination, and that he had at least one day longer, in which to go and see Mike, and find out still more about his fall and about Pop.

XX.

THREE LITTLE PIGS.

Monday morning had come, and Ainslee, looking from the window of the little room where Jack and he had slept, saw the rain pouring down steadily, quite as if it meant to last all day.

"Goody!" Jack shouted; "now you can't go home to day!" but Ainslee, sitting down on the foot of the bed, almost cried.

"I knowed every one o' my lessons perfeck last week," he said, "an' there isn't but three days more of school, an' I didn't want to miss one single day."

"'Twon't hurt," said Jack. "You can say your spellin' to me maybe, Ainslee, an' go home this afternoon."

"You don't know spellin' much. I don't want to say it to you," Ainslee growled, kicking one shoe out of the way. "I'd say it to mamma, if I said it to anybody."

"I guess I know more'n you do, anyway," said Jack, indignantly. "I'm a year older. I've got to three syllables, anyhow."

"There ain't anything about silly bulls, in my spellin'," said Ainslee. "I'm learnin' 'Baker, shady, lady,' an' I know most every word perfeck."

"No! ain't you great!" said Jack, making ready to explain what syllables were, but cut short by mamma, who just then called Ainslee to come and amuse Bertie for a few moments while she finished dressing. Breakfast was ready at seven, in order that they might make an early start for home, in case it should stop raining, but of this there was not one sign. Gray clouds hung low, hiding every bit of blue sky, and Ainslee as he looked out to them, lost all appetite even for fried potato, and sat still, knocking his knife against his plate and looking almost sulky. Jack had explained matters to his father on the way down-stairs, and Uncle John, who knew just how it felt to lose one of the last days before examination, tried, while he ate his breakfast, to think what had better be done.

"You will not think of going this morning, of course," Aunt Sarah said, as she handed a cup of coffee to Mr. Barton.

"No, indeed," he answered. "That is, if you are willing to keep us a day longer. It may hold up by afternoon, but I should not like to risk driving home this morning on Bertie's account, though I am sorry on Ainslee's."

Ainslee, who had been hoping that possibly papa would go after all, sat winking very hard for half a minute, and then jumping from his chair, which tumbled over at once, ran up-stairs and shut himself into Jack's room. Lizzie, who followed, heard him crying, but he made no answer to either calls or knocks, and she went down again to the dining-room, discouraged. Jack met with no better success, and the two sat down in the window, and wondered when it would stop raining, and how long it would be before Ainslee felt better.

The old rooster walked around the house, his long tail soaked into one feather, and dragging on the ground, and after him came Cleopatra, a stately white hen, who ruled all the others, and had the handsomest chickens that ever were seen.

"See how wet she is," said Lizzie, "and she don't mind the rain a bit. Look at the ducks, pulling the angle-worms out o' the ground. I should think angle-worms would know enough to stay in rainy days, an' then the ducks wouldn't get 'em. Jack! there's Mr. Green at the gate, and I'm going to open the door."

Lizzie ran through the hall, followed closely by Jack, who came with such speed, that he nearly fell over Mr. Green, who looked down in surprise as the door flew open.

"Your father to home!" he said, stepping into the hall, and shaking off a shower of rain-drops. "I've come for them peas."

"Sure enough," Uncle John said, coming forward. "Good morning, Mr. Green. You're not going to Windsor in this rain?"

"Haven't missed a Monday for pretty nearly 'leven years," Mr. Green answered. "I guess the folks that buy, would be poorly off for sass, if I didn't come along Monday's. Did you see my Ann yesterday, with her fine top-knot? That's where it come from; eggs an' butter, and sich, the women folks smuggle in 'long with the beans and peas. Your'n ready?"

"There is Mike with them, now," said Uncle John, to whom a sudden thought had come. "Mary!" he called to Mrs. Barton, who came out to the hall. "Here's a chance for Ainslee, if you're not afraid of his getting a little wet. I can do him up in my rubber coat, if you like."

"Will Mr. Green be willing?" said mamma.

"Sartin ma'am," said Mr. Green, who had been looking at Mike. "What is it you want to send? Berries?"

"Not exactly," laughed mamma. "It is my little boy, who is very anxious to be at school today, as he is getting ready for the Examination on Wednesday. The school is on your road, I think,

and if you will take charge of him, I shall be very much obliged."

"Bring him along, ma'am," said Mr. Green, "and the sooner the better, for the rain has put me back more'n an hour."

Mamma hurried up to Ainslee, who had stopped crying, and stood by the window, drawing faces with his finger on the wet panes, and wondering what was going on down-stairs, though a little ashamed to go and see.

"Here is comfort for you," said mamma, cheerily. "Mr. Green, the man who carries round vegetables, you know, says he will take you with him. You must stay all day at school if it keeps on raining, and go home under Sinny's umbrella. Will you be a very good boy, and not trouble grandma, if we do not come till to-morrow?"

"I guess I will *so!*" said Ainslee, just as happy as he had been miserable, and dancing about the room. Uncle John came in with the rubber coat which was put on, over head and all, and even then was so long that he could hardly step. Jack and Lizzie shouted when he appeared at the top of the stairs, and papa picked him up and carried him out to the long wagon, where Mr. Green stowed him away on the bottom, in front of the seat.

"I didn't kiss mamma, nor say 'good by,' nor nothin'," said Ainslee, pulling back the coat so that he could see out. "I'll give you three, papa, quick, one for you an' two for them, and tell John and Lizzie to come over to grandpa's just as soon as they can."

The latter part of this speech was lost to papa, for Mr. Green had chirruped to the little brown horse, which started down the road on a brisk trot.

"Do you go to church?" Ainslee said at last, after thinking for some time what he had better talk about. "I looked all round yesterday, but I guess I didn't see you."

"Did you look up to the choir?" said Mr. Green. "I was there. You wouldn't a-seen me, if you'd looked though."

"Why?" said Ainslee. "They sit right in front o' the gallery, just like Mr. Parker's choir. I could count 'em every one. Did you sing?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Green, beginning to laugh. "I ain't no singer. I blowed."

"Blowed what?" said Ainslee, puzzled.

"The bellers," Mr. Green answered, laughing again. "The bellers to the organ. My boy Tom blows 'em, but he was under the weather yesterday. Ate too many green apples, I reckon, so I blowed instead o' him."

"But I saw a woman, making the organ go,"

said Ainslee, after a moment of trying to understand things. "You ain't a woman."

"Bless you!" said Mr. Green. "I know that. Didn't you know it took two to make an organ go? It's like most everything else in this world. It takes head to play it, but head ain't 'no use, if there ain't hands somewhere round, pumpin' in wind enough to fill them big pipes. Get 'em full, an' all the tune in the world'll come out, if you're a mind to play 'em. Look a-there boy. There's a big worm gettin' ready to crawl up your leg. Pick him off."

"He's just the kind I've been looking for," said Ainslee, picking up the worm and putting it into his pocket. "He's got brown spots on his back, an' he'll make a very speckled butterfly, I guess. I'll save him, an' ask papa."

"Of all the boys!" said Mr. Green, looking at him in surprise. "Does your ma let you pick up big worms like them? You'll get bit."

"No, I won't," said Ainslee. "They ain't a very bity kind. Mamma likes worms most as well as papa. I had a little yellow one in my other pocket, but it isn't there now. I guess it crawled out."

"I guess you can crawl out pretty soon," said Mr. Green, pointing with his whip to the schoolhouse, which could just be seen in the distance.

"What made you want to come to school so bad?"

"Why, the Dezamination; didn't you know?" said Ainslee, beginning at once an acconnt of what was to be, cut short when not half finished by arrival at the school-house door, where half a dozen children stood looking out, to see what this queer black lump in the bottom of Mr. Green's wagon could be.

"It's squashes, summer squashes, I guess," said Sampson. "He told my father he'd got the best kind o' squashes, an' maybe he's done 'em up to keep 'em from getting wet. 'Tain't squashes," he added, suddenly, as Ainslee rolled out. "It's a big pumpkin-head."

"Samp's getting smart," said Tommy Martin, as Sampson, who did not speak to Ainslee now if he could help it, walked back to the school-room.

"I say, Ainslee, I thought you was over to your uncle's. How'd you come? Mr. Green bring you?"

"Yes," Ainslee said, handing back the rubber coat to Mr. Green, who drove on toward the village. "I felt awful 'cause I thought I couldn't come, an' I did come after all. I've got to study out o' your book, Sinny, 'cause mine's at grandma's."

"No it ain't," said Sinny. "Anyway your Speller ain't; you dropped it out o' your strap going home Friday, an' I picked it up. Ain't you glad?"

"What'll I do?" said Ainslee, who had been looking very blank while Sinny spoke. "There was my dinner Aunt Sarah fixed, an' papa said he'd put it in the coat pocket, an' now Mr. Green's gone away with it."

"I've got lots," said Sinny. "You can have some o' mine."

"An' mine, too," Amanda added. "I'll give you half o' mine, Ainslee."

"So'll I," said Tommy; and Ainslee, in a fair way to have plenty of dinner, even if his own was riding off in Mr. Green's wagon, walked in and took his place, just in time. Ann Smith, the little girl from the toll-gate, was there, and looked surprised at seeing him, but could say nothing, because Miss Barrett began calling the roll in a very sharp voice, as if something were the matter with her.

"She's cross," said Ainslee to himself, looking at her. "She most always is cross Mondays. Maybe she'll make me miss my spelling, snapping at me."

Spurred on by this thought, Ainslee opened his book, as soon as the chapter in the Bible

ended, and began on the column of words, of which he had spoken to Jack, and which he studied in a loud whisper, rocking back and forth, and slapping his breast with one hand. Studying, or indeed doing any kind of hard work perseveringly, makes the time fly, and the spelling class was called before he had begun on the multiplication-table. He liked this better now than ever before, because Miss Barrett had taught them to sing it, and on Wednesday afternoons they marched around the school-room, keeping time to the tune. Ainslee only knew as far as "four times five," but shouted all the louder when there were no more words he could say.

To-day he meant to finish the table of Fours, if he could, and went to work at once, when he had spelled. Recess interrupted him, and then, as it still rained, Amanda and Sinny retired to the highest seat in the back of the school-room, and listened to Ainslee's account of his visit at Uncle John's. Miss Barrett knocked on the desk before he had half finished telling about Pop, and Ainslee went back to the little bench, feeling not quite so bright as before recess. Sinny had taken the card to study his own table, and there remained only the Spelling-book, and Sinny's very tattered and torn Reader, every leaf

of which curled up at each end, as if just ready for a spit-ball.

Ainslee looked through this, and then took up the spelling again, but could not get interested in it. The school-room windows were shut tight to keep out the rain, and the air felt hot and close. Miss Barrett scowled over her desk down at the little bench, as if she had made up her mind that some mischief would be going on before long, which she must nip in the bud. Sampson crowded against him, and Ainslee began to wish he were going home at noon, instead of staying through the three long afternoon hours. Sinny presently slipped over a little bit of spruce gum, and he found much comfort in chewing this, till he was called up to say his tables. Sinny and he were quite perfect up to four times nine, and so were Amanda and little Sarah Jones, and Sampson found himself with two bad marks and at the foot of the class, when the lesson was over.

"Anyway, Ainslee Barton kept a jogglin' me, so't I couldn't study nor nothin'," he said; "I wish I sat on another bench."

"I never did," Ainslee exclaimed. "He joggled me awful."

"You're both bad boys," said Miss Barrett. "This afternoon, Sampson, you sit in that empty seat behind, and Ainslee you'll have to have a bad mark if you don't behave."

"I do behave," Ainslee said, sitting down again, with a wish that he or somebody might give Sampson such a punching that he would never tell a lie again. When noon came, a few moments later, he was quite ready to do something harder than "joggling," but Samp, who suspected this, ran off, and did not appear again till one o'clock. Miss Barrett staid, and would have no noise, because her head ached, she said, so that those who had brought their dinner, and to-day almost all had, were limited to talking for amusement.

Ainslee was very hungry, for the ride had given him a great appetite, and then, you know, he had eaten very little breakfast, and so, though Amanda and Tommy and Sinny were as good as their word, and each gave him some of their luncheon, he did not have half enough, and wished he had not promised to stay all day.

Amanda made a paper doll out of a bit of newspaper, and Sinny chewed a piece of one of his mother's old india-rubbers, and pinched it into a pig, which looked so natural, that even big Stephen Jones admired it, and devoted the last bit of his bread to the same purpose, so that before the bell rang again, there were three little pigs, one black, and two an agreeable whity-brown, standing in front of the inkstand on his desk.

If Stephen had lived in New York, or even in Boston, he might have had trouble in getting his pigs to stay together. Baker's bread dries and tumbles apart, no matter how long one may have pinched it, and so does any other sort but real home-made bread, such as perhaps many of you know nothing about.

Stephen, though, had it every day of his life; sweet, tender, wholesome food, such as I wish every little and big child might always eat, and never again the dry chips, that even the best of baker's bread becomes, when a day old. So if any of you who live in cities want a first-class pig, somebody must first make home-made bread, and then with a bit of the soft part, you can in time pinch out, certainly a pig — possibly an elephant.

"Let me have 'em, all three," said Sinny, as Miss Barrett drew her chair up to the table.

"You'll be cutting up with them all the afternoon," said Stephen.

"No I won't; I want 'em to take home," Sinny answered, slipping them into his pocket, as Stephen said nothing more, and taking his place by Ainslee, who was so relieved to have Sampson away, that he felt quite happy again.

The desks, as I have told you before, rose gradually to the back of the room, each one a

little higher than the last, and the youngest children sat in front on a low bench; so low, that the knees of those in the desk behind, were almost on a level with the heads of those in front. There was an open space between this low bench and the top board which made the back of the desk, and any one sitting behind could by stooping touch the little ones in front, without any trouble. By this you will see there was nothing for Ainslee to rest his back against, and how tiresome it would grow, to sit still two or three hours at a time.

Ainslee sat up straight when the roll was called, and thought he would try to be a very good boy, but he was tired of being in-doors so long; the spelling lesson seemed very tedious, and when the reading class of big boys and girls, which quite hid the little ones from Miss Barrett, was called, he laid down his Spelling-book on the end of the bench where Sampson had sat, and turned to Sinny, who had taken the three pigs from his pocket, and set them up beside him.

"What you goin' to do?" he whispered.

"See which one'll stand up the longest," said Sinny. "I've got o' lot o' spit-balls, and I'm goin' to fire 'em at 'em, an' the one that stands up the longest is the best fellow."

"No," whispered Ainslee, "spit-balls ain't

nice. Let's play we're driving them to market, an' they won't go any way we want 'em to."

"Well," said Sinny, putting down his Reader and setting the pigs on it. "Hi-yah now! that ain't the way you've got to go," and Sinny began a drive over the Reader, where the black pig tumbled on the white, and the white ran backwards, and then stood on its head, and would not move forward at all, till Sinny had held it by its tail and made dreadful faces at it.

Mind, I do not say this was right, but it was very hot and close in the school-room, and very weary work for half a dozen little children to sit still as mice, and so I for one, do not wonder that Amanda and Sarah, and Sinny and Ainslee, were very soon in the mischief I am telling you about, and in such danger of laughing aloud, that they had to hold their hands over their mouths.

All this time the Spelling-book lay on the end of the bench, and Sampson, who had tried in vain to see what was going on, and wished he had staid in his own place, spied it at last, as he stooped down to look under, and pulled it through to his own desk. There was no fun in this, though, for Ainslee did not turn around, and presently Sampson, looking down the columns, had a new idea, which he carried out at once. He turned first to see if any one was looking,

and finding that all who might see seemed busy with lessons or reciting, spit suddenly on the last column of the three on which Ainslee had been working so long, and then tore off the last four or five words, rolling up the little piece into a ball, and pushing it to the very back of the desk. Then he put it back on the bench, and waited, with his heart beating quite fast, for Ainslee to turn around. He had not thought yet what to say, in case Ainslee should at once speak to Miss Barrett. The only thought that had come was, to do something which should make him miss, and send him to the foot of the class, where Sampson spent the greater part of the time.

So he waited now, expecting each moment to see the book taken up, and growing more and more frightened as he thought of what might happen.

The reading lesson went on, for Miss Barrett was drilling her older scholars for the coming Wednesday, and each one had to read his or her paragraph over and over, before she was satisfied. At last it ended, and she called, "third class in spelling, take their places."

The four little sinners on the small bench started, as the other class filed by them. Sinny stuffed the three pigs into his pocket, and Ainslee, sure that he knew the lesson perfectly, seized

the book without looking at it, and toed the mark fast as he could.

"Where's my Speller," said Miss Barrett, tumbling over the books on her desk. "Never mind; I can't hunt for it now. Hand me yours, Ainslee."

Ainslee handed up the book, and then stood still, half smiling, as he thought how Jack and Lizzie would have laughed, if they could have seen those three pigs. There was such a strange silence, that, still smiling, he looked up at last to see what it meant, and found Miss Barrett's eyes fixed sternly upon him.

"So you laugh, do you, you naughty boy?" she said. "How dare you do such a thing as this? Come here this minute," and Miss Barrett lifted her ruler.

"I haven't done anything," Ainslee said, in surprise, and then remembering how he had been playing a few minutes before, colored deeply, though he still met her eye.

"Don't lie," said Miss Barrett, pushing back her chair. "You know you're telling a lie, or you wouldn't turn so red. You've lost all your good marks, sir, and have got to be feruled."

"I only played a little, 'cause I was tired," said Ainslee, beginning to cry.

"Only played a little?" repeated Miss Bar-

rett, holding up the book, so that Ainslee for the first time saw what had happened. "So you call it playing, to spit on your book and then tear it, do you, bad boy?"

"I never did," said Ainslee, indignantly. "I keep my books nice. Somebody hateful did; I didn't."

"Take care," said Miss Barrett. "There's a great wet place here. If you didn't do it, who did? Did Sinny?"

"No, he didn't," said Ainslee. "The book wasn't anywhere near him."

"How do you know it wasn't?" asked Miss Barrett, while every boy and girl in school paid the strictest attention, wondering how things would come out.

"'Cause I put it on the end where he wasn't," said Ainslee.

"Well, perhaps he took it when you were not looking," Miss Barrett went on.

"He couldn't," Ainslee replied, after some hesitation, "for I was looking at him an' the pigs all the time."

"The pigs!" repeated Miss Barrett. "Well, perhaps I will get at something, some time to-day. Come up here, both of you. What pigs does he mean, Simeon Smith?"

"Mine," said Sinny, pulling the three from his

pocket, and putting them down before her. "We played with 'em some, when you was hearin' the readin'."

"Wicked boys!" said Miss Barrett. "If you were playing with pigs, it's more than likely you played with your book. Did any one in school spit on Ainslee Barton's book?"

Dead silence.

"Maybe Samp did," hinted Sinny, as Miss Barrett looked about the room.

"He's in the seat behind; he couldn't," said she. "Sampson Simmons, did you spit on Ainslee Barton's book?"

"No ma'am," came from Sampson, who, dreading the feruling which would be sure to follow if he told the truth, preferred to lie, feeling very sure no one had seen him.

"I didn't suppose he did," said Miss Barrett, once more taking up the ruler. "Hold out your hand, Ainslee Barton."

"I won't," said Ainslee, with flashing eyes, and too excited now to cry. "I don't tell lies; you know I don't. I won't hold out my hand."

"We'll see if you won't," said Miss Barrett, angrily, pulling him up to her. "Hold out your hand this minute."

"I won't! I won't!" screamed Ainslee. Sinny and Amanda began to cry, and one of the big boys called, "Shame!"

Miss Barrett caught his hand, and tried to bring the ruler down upon it, but Ainslee pulled back so strongly, that her own knuckles received the hardest blow. Quite beside herself now with passion, she boxed his ears furiously, and then shaking him till she could shake no longer, seated him on the yellow stool near her.

"We'll see if you'll act like that again," she said. Now, Simeon Smith, hold out your hand."

Sinny took his feruling almost without crying, except for Ainslee, who sat still on his stool, with red face and tumbled hair, but such a determined look, that Miss Barrett, who had grown cooler, hardly knew whether to think it obstinacy or honesty. Whatever it was, she would conquer such a temper, she said to herself, and she called up another class. Lessons went badly, however. The children looked sympathizingly at Ainslee, who looked at nobody, but sat as if his thoughts were very far away. Miss Barrett hurried through the recitation, and then touched the bell for recess. The rain had stopped, and all ran out to gather about the door-step and discuss the matter, while Miss Barrett turned to Ainslee.

"What made you do such a thing?" she said.

No answer.

"What made you do such a thing?" repeated she. "I don't want to whip you, when you're not a bad boy."

Still no answer, and Miss Barrett turned away excitedly. "I shall go home with you, and tell your Ma exactly how it was," she said. "I don't want such a bad boy in my school any longer," and she struck the desk sharply to call in the children, who came in fast, looking curiously at Ainslee. How long that last hour seemed to him as he sat on the stool, ready to break down and cry any moment, if only mamma had been at home to run to at once. He was not certain how grandma would receive the story, and grew less so as he walked along by Miss Barrett after school. Sinny followed close behind, but went no further than the kitchen, where he stopped to tell Ann, while Miss Barrett walked around to the front door, and rang the bell. Grandma herself answered it.

"Ainslee!" she said, astonished. "Why, where did you come from? Where's your mother?"

Miss Barrett gave him no time to answer, but whisking into the parlor, sat down, and told her story.

"I hardly think Ainslee would deny it, if he had done it," said grandpa, who had come in, silently; "it is not like him. I will ask him, myself. Ainslee, my boy, did you tear your book?"

"No, grandpa," said Ainslee, simply; and grandpa, looking into his honest eyes, could not but believe him.

"Of course he'd say 'no' to you, and of course it's very natural you should take his part," said Miss Barrett, her tone growing a little milder, as grandpa looked steadily at her.

"I am extremely sorry his father and mother are not at home to-day," said grandpa. "They will be here to-morrow at latest, I think; in the mean time, so far as I can judge from your own statement, Ainslee has hardly been treated with fairness. Pardon me for saying, that though circumstances were somewhat against him, you had no right to punish till you had examined the matter more fully. Justice to a child is quite as essential as justice to a man; and if you find yourself mistaken, I am very sure you will regret this sincerely."

"I'm not in the least likely to," said Miss Barrett, rising. "And I must say, Mr. Walton, I didn't expect to see you helping a child out in impudence and disobedience, to say nothing of lying," and opening the door, she had gone before grandpa could add anything more.

Ainslee had thrown himself face down on grandma's lounge, and was crying as if his heart would break, when grandpa, after a few minutes'

walking up and down the parlor, went back to the bedroom.

"I wish mamma were here," he said, sitting down by Ainslee, "but she soon will be, I think. Don't cry so, my boy. You needn't cry if you didn't do it."

"'Tisn't that — only part," said Ainslee, sitting up suddenly. "I don't care for her pounding and shaking me. But I felt so good this morning to think Mr. Green brought me, an' I wouldn't have to miss my lessons nor nothin', an' now — an' now — I don't want — ever to go to her school again," and Ainslee swallowed a great sob which almost choked him.

"Well," said grandpa, wait till mamma comes, and do as she says. Come out in the garden now, and we will see how fast everything has grown in the rain."

Ainslee wiped his eyes presently, and followed grandpa, but neither walking nor talking, nor the best luncheon Ann could give him, did him very much good, and when just before sunset, old Pete drove up, and mamma and papa came in, Ainslee had no voice to tell his trouble, but ran into her arms, and sobbed as he hardly had before. Papa's eyes grew very bright and dark as he listened.

"I will see about it to-morrow," he said, "when all the children are together. You go no more to that school."

"I'm glad o' that," said Ainslee. "I couldn't say any more lessons to her, papa, but — but — only think how *dreffful* hard I studied my lessons for the Dezamination, an' my piece, an' everything. O papa!"

"It is very hard to be so disappointed," said papa; "very hard, indeed, and it is no comfort to tell you, that we all have to suffer in the same way sometimes as we go through the world. It *is* a comfort, though, to know that so long as we are right, no real harm can be done us. You know you did not tell a lie, and so you can bear this better than if you had."

"I know that," said Ainslee, "but it don't make me want to go to school any more."

There was no comfort for this trouble, and though all did their best to cheer him, he went to bed early, heavy-hearted.

Between eight and nine o'clock, papa, sitting in the front door, heard foot-steps coming around the house, and looked up to see the old bridge-keeper's son, father to the little girl who sometimes took tolls.

"I h'ain't but a minute, Mr. Barton," he said; "but my little gal told me about your boy, an' bein' down in the village, I concluded to stop, goin' home. He ain't none to blame about the book, whatever else he did."

"What does your little girl know about it?" asked Mr. Barton.

"She says she see Sampson Simmons a-spittin' on a book, an' tearin' off a piece," Smith answered. "She was in the readin' class, an' happened to look round, an' he was doin' it then. Ann would a-told on it, when Miss Barrett was whackin' him round, but she was skeery for fear her turn might come next, so she kep' still, an' only told me when she came home. She's a good enough teacher, but she's awful sassy when her temper's up. You'll have her turned off, I reckon;" and Smith walked on, leaving Mr. Barton glad, indeed, that there seemed a way of straightening things.

Ainslee was very quiet when morning came, and looked surprised enough when papa told him to get ready for school. "You need not stay, you know, unless you like," he said, and Ainslee, sure that something good was coming, ran for his cap, and walked on by papa.

"I shouldn't wonder if he was goin' to lick Miss Barrett," said Sinny, who came behind with Tommy Martin, and this opinion travelling on through Amanda to several others in front, gained such ground, that the few in the schoolroom fully expected to see Mr. Barton walk in with a great stick in his hand, and possibly ruler Miss Barrett on both hands.

Miss Barrett herself looked extremely doubtful as she returned his "Good morning," and took no notice of Ainslee, who staid close by his father.

"I am sorry to interrupt the usual order of school," said Mr. Barton, when the scholars had all assembled. "But if you will allow me, Miss Barrett, there are one or two questions I would like to ask."

Miss Barrett said something which might be either yes or no, and pointed to a chair.

"Is that Ann Smith?" he said, sitting down. "Yes, I see it is. Come here, and do not be at all afraid, my dear. Sampson Simmons, come and stand by her. Now, Ann, tell me exactly what you saw yesterday."

Sampson, who had come forward, terribly frightened, and yet sure nobody knew, grew red and then pale, as Ann, in a very few words, told exactly what had happened.

"Now answer, sir, at once," said Mr. Barton, turning to him, and looking, as Tommy said afterward, just like lightning. "Did you tear Ainslee's book?"

"Yes," said Sampson, in a flood of tears, "but I didn't mean him to get licked."

"That is all," said Mr. Barton, rising. "You will take whatever course seems best to you, Miss

Barrett. Do you want to stay this morning, Ainslee?"

"No, sir," said Ainslee, "I want to go home," and he walked out with papa, glad that all should know the truth, and yet sighing, as the little school-house was left behind, that such a change should have come in one day.

Sampson was whipped and sent home in disgrace. Miss Barrett said nothing then of her intentions. The Examination passed off tolerably well, and vacation began, but when the Committee met, in the afternoon of Wednesday, a note was handed them from Miss Barrett, resigning her place, and as Mr. Martin was the head man on this Committee, and had heard the whole story of Ainslee's trouble from Tommy and Amanda, you may be sure she was not asked to change her mind.

So Ainslee's first teacher passed out from any connection with his little life, though some of you may think, as I do, that the memory of her unjust action will be a sore spot in his memory for many a long year to come, however fully he may forgive her, or however well he may know that, if the three little pigs had staid in Sinny's pocket, the trouble very likely might not have come. Sampson you will hear no more about, for this year at any rate, and so, one by one, we are

leaving behind the big and little people with whom we have had to do, and very soon, sooner than I like to think, we must say good-by to Ainslee himself. Shall you be sorry? I shall.

XXI.

THE END.

Everybody was in the summer-house, grandpa and grandma Walton, mamma and papa, Ainslee and Bertie. Grandma sat in a rocking-chair grandpa had brought out for her, and knit on a speckled red stocking, to be Bertie's by and by, while grandpa cut at a very small something, which Ainslee watched curiously. Mamma was knitting too, bright worsteds, which would very soon turn into what Ainslee called a "Raffgan," and some of you who know better, would say was an Affghan.

Papa had a big book, and read or talked, and Ainslee listened when he heard anything about animals, or ran from grandpa, to look at the pictures with which the book was filled. It was "Livingstone's Travels in Africa," and though a good deal of it he could not understand, yet it was very nice to find out what the pictures meant, and think about them when the big words came.

Bertie sat on the floor with his blocks, which made periods sometimes where Dr. Livingstone

had not put them, for when they were piled up, high as they could be, Bertie knocked them down, and shouted for everybody to look. Papa stopped several times, but said at last, —

"Take him into the garden, Ainslee, and run up and down the paths, till I finish this chapter, and then I will go up to the dove-house with you."

Ainslee, who had half hesitated when papa began, ran out at once when the dove-house was mentioned, and Bertie ran after. He could really run now, for he was almost two years old, and ready for a "folic," any minute, and now such a play began about the old summer-house, that papa almost wished both had staid in it. Ainslee hid behind a grape-vine and called Bertie to find him, who did it in half a minute, and then hid directly in the very same place, sure that Ainslee never would think of looking there. Then Ainslee ran about, calling "Where *is* Bertie? I can't find Bertie; Bertie all gone," and looking behind the rose-bushes, and lifting up the leaves of the very grape-vine, but never seeing him, you may be sure, till a wonderful squeal was heard, and Bertie ran right into him, and then laughed as if such a joke never had been heard of before.

Then Ainslee made a very low bow, which always delighted him, and said, — "How *do* you do, Mr. Barton? How do you *do*, sir?" and Bertie nodded his little head till he staggered, and answered, "I pitty well."

Then a very small, yellow and white, hairy caterpillar, going on a gallop over a cabbage leaf, was suddenly stopped, and Bertie, sitting down in the path, held out his fat arm, and let the caterpillar walk up, to meet a lady-bug which was coming down, and which took no notice of him, but ran right on to Bertie's hand, and then dropped to the ground.

"So that is the way you entertain the child," said grandpa, who, for the last minute or so, had stood over them. "A bug in his hand, and a worm on his arm."

"'Tisn't a bity worm," Ainslee said, "and it's the nicest kind o' bug, grandpa. Oh what's that?"

Grandpa handed him the work he had been doing in the summer-house; two little baskets cut from cherry pits, handles and all, perfect as could be, and fastened together with a bit of bright worsted.

"Two teenty, cunning baskets," said Ainslee. "Are they mine, grandpa? Can I do what I'm a mind to with 'em?"

"Yes," said grandpa, walking on, and Ainslee ran into the summer-house to show them to mamma.

"Just such ones as grandpa used to make for me," she said; "and I used to hang them on Minerva's arm."

"Whose arm?" said Ainslee.

"'The white lady with the owl,' you called her a year ago," mamma went on.

"Oh, I know — in the parlor," said Ainslee. "I'd hang these there, but I want to give one away. Grandpa said I could do what I was a mind to with 'em, mamma. I want to give one to Amanda."

"Well," said mamma, "and I'll tell you a nice little way to do it. Bring me one of those four-o'clocks, Ainslee."

Ainslee brought one in a moment, and mamma cut the bit of worsted which held the two baskets, and set one inside the flower-cup.

"It's in a little nest now, you see," she said, folding the petals gently about it, till the flower seemed a just opening bud. "Now for some very fine thread;" and mamma tied a little bit around the flower, just tight enough to hold the petals well in place.

"When you go to Amanda's," she went on, "you can carry this with some roses perhaps,

and tell her you have brought her a very queer flower, which must be put in water right away."

"I know just what to do," interrupted Ainslee, jumping up and down. "Don't tell me another word, mamma, so't can be most all me."

"Very well," said mamma, laughing. "Now I am going in with Bertie, while papa and you climb to the dove-house; as soon as that is over, you can wash your face, and make your call on Amanda. I'll keep the flower till you come back."

"Come too," said Ainslee. "Let nurse take Bertie, and you come too. I'll holler to her."

"Not to-day," mamma said, walking on, "for very soon I'm going to the village to do some errands."

"You'll break your neck, sure as can be," called grandma from her rocking-chair, as papa went through the gate. "Nobody's been in the dove-house for years, not since Ainslee was a boy."

"We won't go up if it is at all unsafe," said papa, while Ainslee second ran on before, and held the door open till he came.

Grandpa's barn was a very old one, though strong and good still. Below were the stalls for horses and cattle, and the great, open floor, where threshing was done. Then came the hay loft, and above that, a curious sort of third story, right

up in the roof, under the ridge pole, and up to which Ainslee had often looked, sighing to get there. A ladder had once upon a time led to it, but long ago it had tumbled to pieces, and there were now no visible means of reaching this unknown ground.

Ainslee scrambled up to the hay loft, and then stood still, wondering how papa would manage.

Mr. Barton looked about a moment, and then going to the door, which opened into the little room over the carriage-house, unlocked it, and pulled out a barrel, which he set up securely, where the hay was piled up highest, and then mounted it. "Up with you," he said, pulling Ainslee along, and then lifting him to the floor above, climbed up and stood by him, while the barrel rolled to the foot of the mow. It was so dark, Ainslee could hardly see, and the floor of loose boards shook so under their feet, that he held his father's hand tight as they walked over it.

"No danger," said Mr. Barton; "for if we should fall, it would only be into the hay, you know. Here's the little door," and he stopped short before a very low door, which creaked and growled on its rusty hinges, and almost refused to be opened, ending at last by yielding so suddenly, that papa almost lost his balance. There

was a rustle of wings, and a flutter and stir among the old families, who had had quiet possession so long, that they could not tell what to make of this intrusion, and Ainslee stood still a moment, half expecting to have them about his ears. Right along the end of this cubby-hole was a line of boxes, and he walked forward and looked in.

"It's the nest!" he cried; "see, papa! little eggs, and there's two baby doves. Oh, I wish I could come here every day!"

The mother dove stirred uneasily, as Ainslee put his hand down to touch the little ones, but did not fly away. Indeed, all of them had fed so long by the kitchen-door, that I think they knew him very well, and were sure he would do no harm. Each box had a little arched opening, and Ainslee, peeping through, could see grandma in the summer-house, and look off "over the hills and far away."

"Now you have seen the dove-house," said papa at last; "the only thing at grandpa's that you did not know all about a year ago. When you come here next summer, perhaps we will try the climb again."

"Come next summer!" repeated Ainslee. "Sha'n't we stay here all the time, papa? I thought we was going to live here always."

"Not always," said papa, "but a good many months in each year, I hope. We shall stay till October, probably, and then go home to New York. Don't you want to see how it looks there?"

"Not much," said Ainslee, "only the Museum maybe. Can I go to the Museum all I want to."

"We'll see," said papa, shutting the little door behind them. "Now for a jump, Ainslee!" and papa swung his arms, and went down in fine style into the hay, followed at once by Ainslee.

"Ain't it fun?" said he; "I wish we could do it over again."

"Too choky," said papa, sliding down to the floor below, and running out to the open air. "What will mamma say when she sees my over coat?"

"She'll say you're most as bad as me," Ainslee answered, pulling off the bits of hay which were all over papa. "Now I'm goin' to Amanda's, papa. I wish Amanda and Tommy and Sinny were going to New York too. There's Sinny now, and he's got something."

Sinny ran into the wood-house, and Ainslee after, to find him sitting on the saw-horse, with one hand behind him.

"Guess what I've got," he said; "sum'thin' good."

"I know," said Ainslee, who had caught a glimpse of it, "it's a apple; a big one."

"Off the new tree," said Sinny. "It tumbled off, an' granther let me have it. Bite."

Ainslee, whose mouth was all ready, bit directly.

"First-rate," he said. "We goin' to take turns bitin', Sinny."

Sinny nodded, and the "bitin'" went on till only the core remained.

"Now I'm goin' to Amanda's," Ainslee said; "an' I've got to have my face washed. I'll show you something when I come out, Sinny."

Ainslee returned presently with the four-o'-clock in his hand, and as they walked along, explained what he meant to do. Old Peter Smith called Sinny as he went by the gate, and Ainslee walked on to Mr. Martin's, and round to the back yard, where Tommy and Amanda were seesawing.

"Here's some flowers," he said, "an' one of 'em's awful queer, Amanda, an' has got to be put in water right away."

"Which one?" said Amanda. "Nothin' but two four-o'clocks an' some roses. I don't see what there is queer about them."

"Well, you get some water, anyway," said Ainslee, following Amanda to the kitchen, where she presently brought him a cracked tea-cup, half full of water.

"I want some scissors too," said he. "I guess the stems are too long."

Mrs. Martin gave him hers, and Ainslee, while cutting the stems, contrived also to cut the knot in the little thread. The flower did not fly open at once, because the thread had been wound around it several times, and Ainslee put it with the others in the cup, and then stood watching, while Amanda hardly winked, she was so anxious to find out just what was coming. The thread gradually loosened, and then suddenly fell, making it seem as if the flower had truly been a bud, and as the pretty white petals unfolded, Amanda looked in astonishment at the little basket.

"Why, did you ever!" she said. "What is it? Ain't it pretty?"

"It's a cherry pit," said Tommy, picking it up and showing it to his mother, "and just the cutest little basket I ever did see. You put it in there, Ainslee."

"No, I didn't," said Ainslee, seeming very much surprised. "How do you s'pose it got there? It must a-growed."

"Cherries don't grow on four-o'clocks," said Tommy. "Somebody made it, an' you put it in somehow, only I'd just like to know how."

So, after a little while longer declaring that "truly surely he hadn't done it," Ainslee ex-

plained, and Tommy and Amanda both decided to play the same trick on all their friends, and tried tying up the flower themselves, till they had tied it all to bits.

"You're goin' to stay to tea, ain't you?" asked Mrs. Martin, as they all started for the seesaw again.

"Mamma didn't say I mustn't," said Ainslee, "but she don't like me to often, 'cause I come here so much, she says."

"You don't come none too often," said Mrs. Martin, who liked Ainslee very much indeed, though she said he was a "master hand for mischief." "I've got the last o' the raspberries, an' there's goin' to be raspberry short-cake for supper. I guess you'll stay for that."

"I guess so, too," said Ainslee, who knew all about Mrs. Martin's short-cakes, and went out to the back yard, thinking, as he went, how much better times he had here, than he could ever remember in New York.

"What makes you look so sober?" said Amanda, as they sat down on the log, across which the board had balanced.

"Only 'cause I don't want to go back to New York," he answered, "and papa says we're going in October, maybe."

Amanda began to cry at once, and even Tommy looked very sober.

"It's too bad," he said. "Somehow I never thought you was going away, Ainslee. I wish you wasn't."

"So do I," said Ainslee, softly patting Amanda's hand. "Now don't cry a speck more, Amanda, an' I'll tell you what. I'll write you letters, real, true letters, in a envelope, an' everything, an' you can write back, you know, an' every time the postman rings the bell, I'll run down to see if there isn't a letter for me. Won't it be fun? An' maybe — perhaps — you'll come to see me some time, an' go to the Museum, an' everything. Oh!" and Ainslee, who felt much better, danced around Amanda, who wiped her eyes, and thought it would be very nice indeed, but was sure her mother never would let her.

"Mercy on us!" said Mrs. Martin, who called them to supper just then, and whom Amanda asked at once if she might go to New York. "I should think you was crazy, child. It's a den of ravening wolves, an' 'tain't no fit place for folks to live."

"My father ain't a ravelin' wolf, an' he used to live there," said Ainslee, quickly. "It's a real *good* place to live in, if you haven't got any grandpa's, that's a heap nicer."

"Bless the child!" said Mrs. Martin. "Well,

I will say't can't be a very bad place right round where your pa an' ma live, for they'd make the worst kind o' place a pretty tolable one to be in. Hold your plate, Ainslee, for some short-cake."

Ainslee held it without waiting a moment, and then held it again, while Mrs. Martin drowned it in cream, and then all at once, that wonderful short-cake was gone, down to the very last crumb, and Ainslee drew a long sigh, and sat back in his chair.

"I tell you one thing," said Mr. Martin, who had been watching him a moment or two; "you'd better be thankful, you've got such an appetite. Now here I am with the dyspepsy, mornin', noon, an' night, an' I've got to pay for eatin' that short-cake, just the same way I pay for everythin' I eat."

Mr. Martin sighed a longer sigh than Ainslee's, and took some more cold pork and potatoes. If Ainslee had been a little older, he could have told Mr. Martin that pork, whether cold or hot, never cured dyspepsia. As it was, with a vague idea of what was meant, he began again on "hearts and rounds," till he had eaten all he could, and then went out to the yard for a last play before going home. Papa and mamma came, just as he was starting, and chatted by the

gate for a few moments, and then all three walked slowly home together.

Next day it rained, and the day after, too, and Ainslee did whatever came up as best to do, and, on the whole, had a very nice time. He held all mamma's worsteds, and a skein of yarn for grandma — put the play-room in the garret nicely in order, and amused Bertie many an hour in the two days. To be sure he did tramp up and down stairs, and slam doors, and get into people's way, more or less, but it was only what a healthy, active boy could hardly help doing, and nobody scolded him.

Saturday morning came, clear and bright, and Rover whined at the door long before anybody was up, as if very sure Ainslee would have a run with him that day. He was not disappointed, for when the breakfast bell rang, Ainslee came in through the dining-room window, with the reddest of red cheeks, and the hair nurse had brushed so nicely, in one terrible frouze.

"What have you been doing?" said grandma.

"Only running all round everywhere," Ainslee said. "An' grandpa, everything's been growing hard as it could every minute, while it rained. You ought to see the beets."

"I have," said grandpa. "I was in the gar-

den a little while ago, and I saw a young man sitting on the bank, eating blue plums. Who could it have been?"

"It must a-been Jack, I guess," said Ainslee, making very large eyes at grandpa. "Anyway, I couldn't reach but three, grandpa, an' there's heaps on the tree."

"Oh!" said grandpa. "Then *you* know something about it. What in the world!"

Ainslee looked around, and so did all the rest, to see what grandpa could be looking at, that surprised him so much. Dr. Sumner stood in the back yard, talking with a man, and at the gate was a great wagon, used for picnic parties in summer, and sleighing parties in winter, and which would easily hold twenty people.

"I know! I know!" screamed Ainslee, running out to the yard. "You're going up the mountain, Dr. Sumner; I know you are!"

"Nothing is certain in this world, but that we know nothing," said Dr. Sumner, looking solemnly at him, and walking into the house. "Put your breakfast in a basket, Mrs. Walton, and dinner, too, if you like, and wear a bonnet that can be hung up or laid down, without a howl over the trimmings. Put on your hat, Barton, I'm in a hurry."

"Eat your breakfast like a reasonable man,"

said grandpa, bringing a chair, "and then, if you please, explain your intentions."

"The day does that for me," said Dr. Sumner, sitting down, and chipping an egg. "See the sun on that mountain, smell the air, coming in this minute at that window. Could any man in his senses stay in the house to-day? No, sir. Therefore I rode over this morning; left Sally in the stable; ordered the biggest wagon I could find, and four horses to match, and as soon as Mrs. Walton has made up her mind what cap to wear, we are going up the mountain."

"I can't. I never climb," said grandma. "The rest of you can go, and I'll stay at home and keep house."

"Never," said Dr. Sumner. "The horses can climb, if you can't. I'll take a side-saddle, and you shall ride."

"And break my neck," said grandma, indignantly.

"No, ma'am," said Dr. Sumner. "I'll lead the horse myself, and you will come home ten years younger. Your son John told me to bring you."

"My son John is a goose," said grandma, smiling a little, but looking very determined, while Ainslee shouted, —

"Are they going too? Oh! oh!"

"You're too small to climb a mountain," said Dr. Sumner, turning suddenly to him. "Too short, too fat. You can ride to the foot, though, and take a nap in the wagon, while we go up."

"Then Jack and Lizzie are too small," said Ainslee. "I guess I can climb as fast as they can. I *know* I'm going up."

"Perhaps you are," said the Doctor. "Now, friends, fast as you can; we want a long day, and we have five miles to ride. Leave your hoop at home, Mary. No sensible woman would wear such a thing, climbing anywhere."

"Very well," laughed mamma, and within half an hour, the great wagon moved off, with the whole family in it, even grandma, who, declaring to the very last minute that she could not and would not go, had had a bonnet from somewhere jammed upon her head, and been led out by Dr. Sumner, just as if she were longing to go.

"I shall take my death cold, coming home," she said; "no shawl or anything, and people will think I'm crazy, wearing this bonnet. Where did you get it?"

"Where I got the shawls," said Dr. Sumner, pointing to a heap in the end of the wagon. "I emptied the cloak closet, and this bonnet was on the floor in the corner."

"I put it there to give away," said grandma, "and then forgot."

"Here is something better," said mamma, handing grandma's brown barege sun-bonnet to her. "Do give me that bonnet, mother, and we'll drop it somewhere. I had it when Ainslee was a baby, and who would think now, I could ever have called it pretty!"

"It never was," said Dr. Sumner, settling himself comfortably. "It never could have been. There is no such thing as a pretty bonnet. No woman would wear it, if there were. I remember your mother's wedding bonnet distinctly, Mary. It was a blue silk coal-scuttle; an enormous one, with a ribbon tree growing out of the top."

"I've seen it," said Ainslee. "It's in the garret."

"Ah!" said Dr. Sumner, and then was silent a few moments. Ainslee waited to hear what would come next, and hearing nothing, turned his attention to the horses, which trotted fast, as if going were a pleasure. It seemed but a very little while, when Uncle John's house came in sight, and Jack and Lizzie danced out to the great wagon, followed by Aunt Sarah and Uncle John, and — somebody behind, whom Ainslee was so astonished to see, that he sat with his mouth wide open. Grandma screamed a little bit, and everybody looked just as surprised as our

Ainslee, when Uncle Ainslee himself jumped in among them, and hugged grandma and mamma, and shook hands with everybody, till the driver said to himself, they were the craziest party that ever climbed Ascutney.

"How *did* you get here," and "Where *have* you been," one and another asked, and in time Uncle Ainslee told them that he had come from the North in the night train, which had been detained, so that he did not get into town till nearly seven. Dr. Sumner had been the first person he met, and finding what the plan for the day was, Uncle Ainslee had taken Sally, and ridden back to Uncle John's, charging Dr. Sumner on no account to leave grandma at home.

"You'll be worn out, travelling so, and then climbing all day," grandma said.

But Uncle Ainslee declared he had slept beautifully, full half the night, and that nothing in the world could be quite so delightful as going up the mountain with her. Then how they all talked, till the foot of Ascutney was reached, and grandma once more declared, that nothing could induce her to ride on horseback. Somehow or other though, before she knew it, the horse was ready: Uncle Ainslee's strong arms had lifted her to it, grandpa walked by her side, and she found herself really very comfortable,

and actually going up, while the rest of the party came behind.

Half-way up was the spring, and, hot and tired, they sat about it for a little while, drank the cold, clear water, and rested. Rover, who had shown himself when they got to Uncle John's, when of course it was too late to send him home again, whisked about, not tired one bit, but finding so many squirrels to bark at, that he was in a fair way to be very hoarse when night came.

Presently the ascent began again. Ascutney is by no means a hard mountain to climb, but the children's small legs were tired enough, when, coming out of the forest, which rises almost to the very top, they found themselves really at the journey's end, and a hundred miles of country before them.

Beds of white moss were under their feet, thick and soft, like great cushions, and the tired party sat down here, leaning back against the rocks, and looking off to the winding river and fair meadows; the villages, where the white church spires of the nearest could just be seen; and on the west of the Connecticut, green hills piling up to meet the Green Mountain chain, covered with thick forests.

The fresh wind blew over them, spicy with pine and hemlock, cooling the hot faces, and by

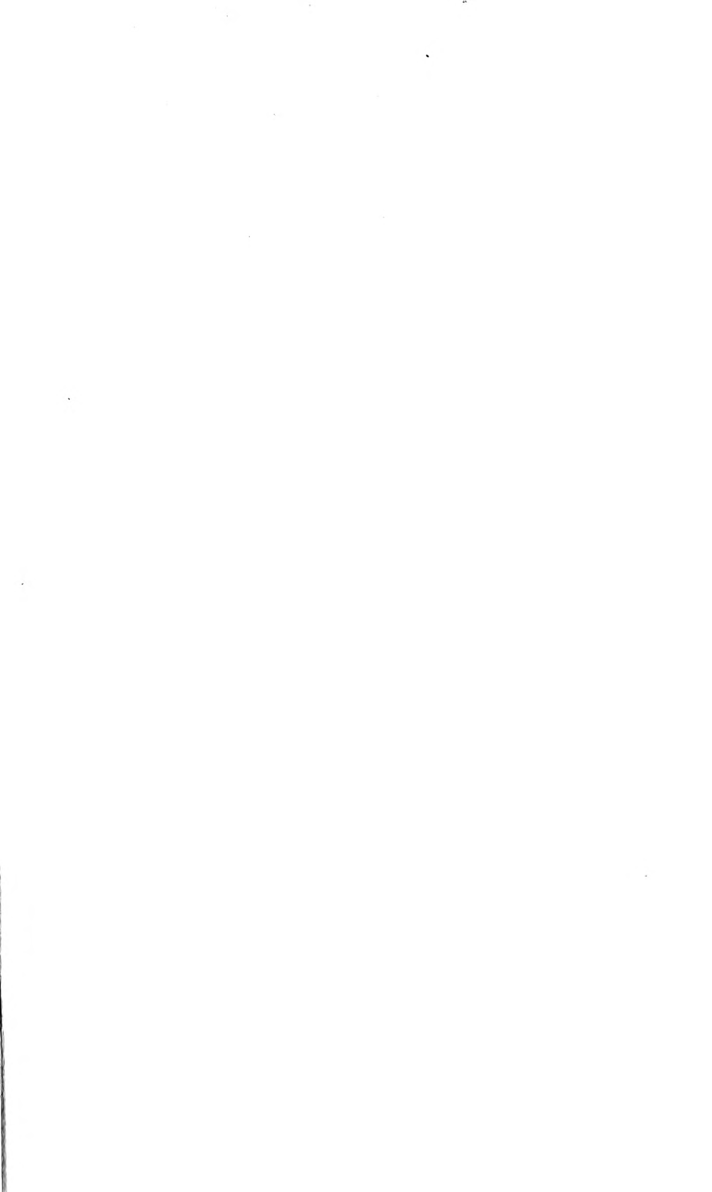
and by, when Ainslee and Jack and Lizzie had looked at all their childish eyes could take in of the sweet landscape before them, they wandered off, picking winter-green leaves, and making a collection of the prettiest pebbles to be found. Uncle Ainslee followed presently, and showed them, among the rocks on the western side, a den, where, two or three years before, a very fierce panther had been killed, the skin of which, he told them, Dr. Sumner had in a carriage robe.

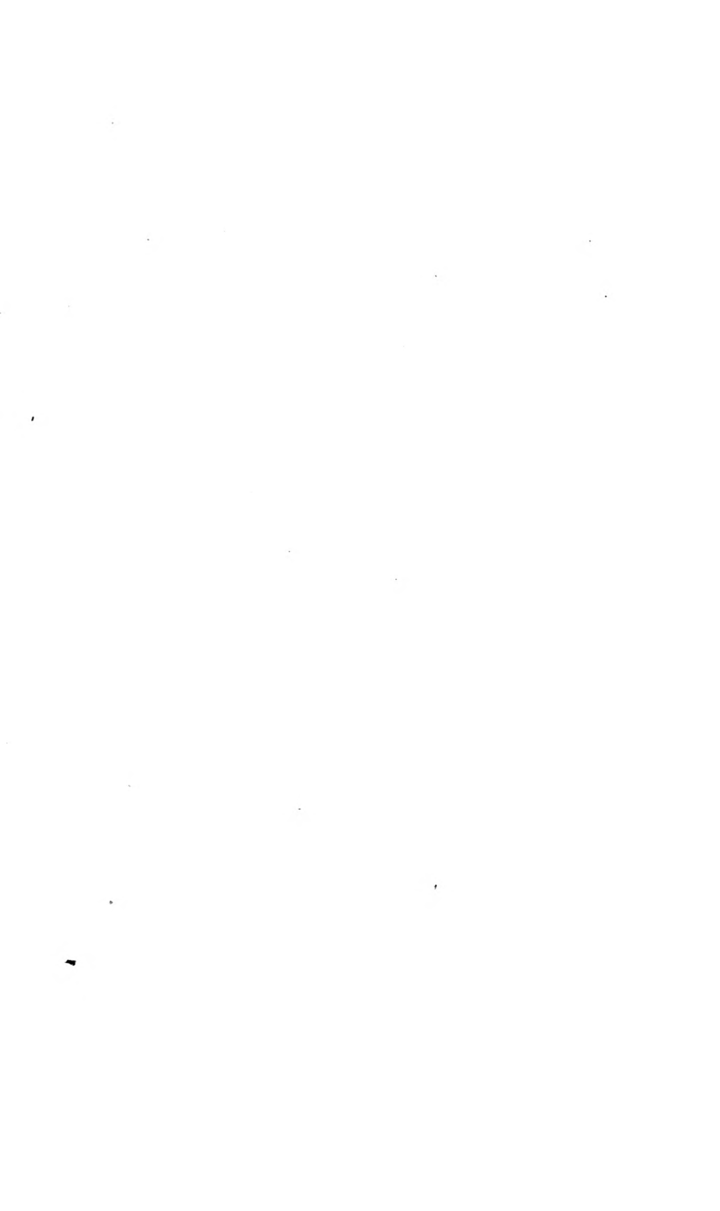
Mamma called while he was talking, and all went back to the luncheon, which was just double what they wanted, for grandma and Aunt Sarah both, had each packed a great basketful. How hungry they were, and when everybody had had enough, and the things were put back in the baskets, Ainslee, with his head in mamma's lap, and Lizzie and Jack by Aunt Sarah, laid down on the moss beds, and listened to the talk which went on for a little while before starting down the mountain. The voices grew indistinct; then far off, like the hum of bees, and all at once the three children were sound asleep, in the broad daylight too, with the sun shining down, and little white clouds sailing so close about their heads, that a hand stretched out would have touched them, it seemed.

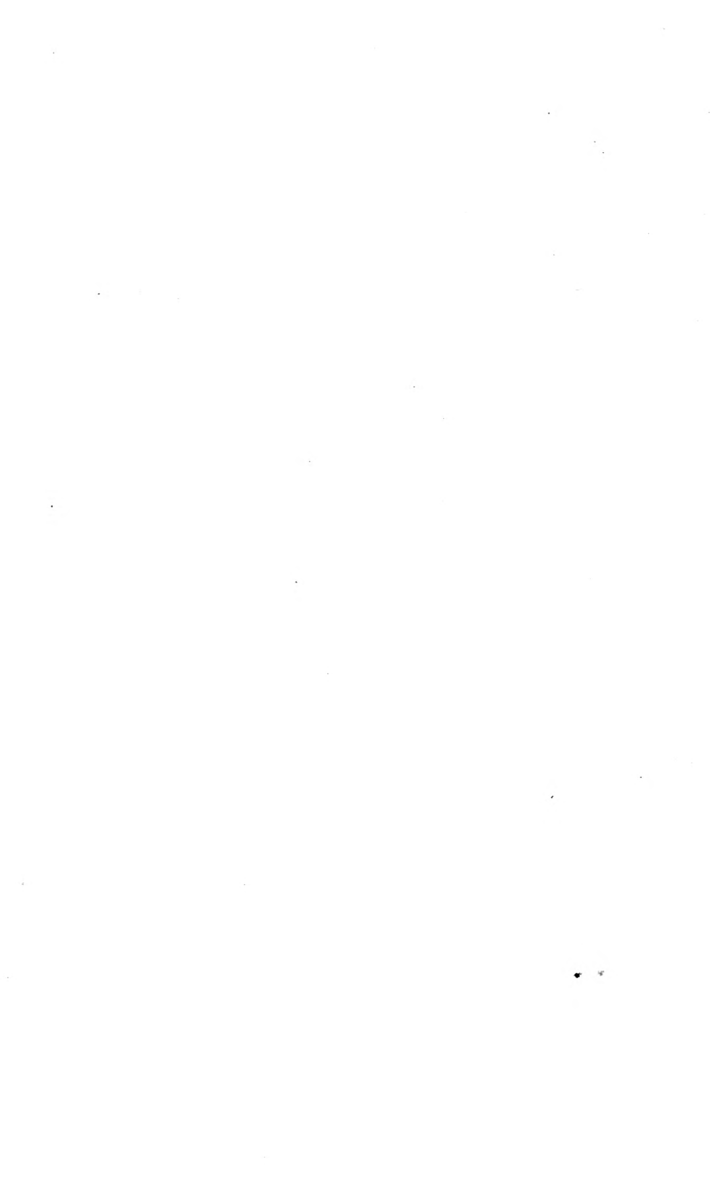
Why should we not leave the people there?

You know they came down again, and that Jack and Lizzie are probably playing under the old trees at home, and this very day, Ainslee may have walked down Broadway, just behind you.

So we come to the last chapter of all, and who knows when I shall tell you more of the children, whom I hope you like almost as well as some of those you play with. Another year, perhaps — perhaps never, but however this may be, I shall always like to think of the little people who have read the stories, and to hope, that if not as mischievous, they may be always as loving and generous, as honest and as true as my Ainslee.







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